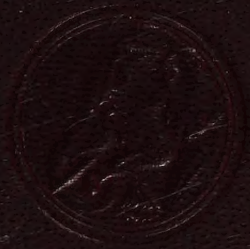

COMPACT EDITION
OF RUDYARD KIPLING
VOLUME FOUR

Stalky & Co.

Puck of Pook's Hill

"Captains Courageous"

Disko Troop

Stalky & Co.

Puck of Pook's Hill

"Captains Courageous"

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

Volume Four

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK · · LONDON

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RUDYARD KIPLING

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Disko Troop *Frontispiece*

"CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS"

The Song of Fin McCoul 86

Uncle Salters 122

STALKY & CO.

TO

CORMELL PRICE

HEAD-MASTER, UNITED SERVICES COLLEGE,
WESTWARD HO, BIDEFORD, NORTH DEVON, 1874–1894

"Let us now praise famous men"—
Men of little showing —
For their work continueth,
And their work continueth,
Greater than their knowing.

Western wind and open surge
Tore us from our mothers;
Flung us on a naked shore
(Twelve bleak houses by the shore!)
Seven summers by the shore!)
'Mid two hundred brothers.

There we met with famous men
Set in office o'er us.
And they beat on us with rods —
Faithfully with many rods —
Daily beat us on with rods —
For the love they bore us!

Out of Egypt unto Troy —
  Over Himalaya —
Far and sure our bands have gone —
Hy — Brasil or Babylon,
Islands of the Southern Run,
  And cities of Cathaia!

And we all praise famous men —
  Ancients of the College;
For they taught us common sense —
Tried to teach us common sense —
Truth and God's Own Common Sense
  Which is more than knowledge!

Each degree of Latitude
  Strung about Creation
Seeth one (or more) of us,
(Of one muster all of us —
Of one master all of us —)
  Keen in his vocation.

This we learned from famous men
  Knowing not its uses
When they showed in daily work
Man must finish off his work —
Right or wrong, his daily work —
  And without excuses.

Servants of the staff and chain,
Mine and fuse and grapnel —
Some before the face of Kings,
Stand before the face of Kings;
Bearing gifts to divers Kings —
Gifts of Case and Shrapnel.

This we learned from famous men
Teaching in our borders.
Who declarèd it was best,
Safest, easiest, and best —
Expeditious, wise, and best —
To obey your orders.

Some beneath the further stars
Bear the greater burden.
Set to serve the lands they rule
(Save he serve no man may rule),
Serve and love the lands they rule,
Seeking praise nor guerdon.

This we learned from famous men
Knowing not we learned it.
Only, as the years went by —
Lonely, as the years went by —
Far from help as years went by
Plainer we discerned it.

Wherefore praise we famous men
From whose bays we borrow —
They that put aside To-day —
All the joys of their To-day —
And with toil of their To-day
Bought for us To-morrow!

Bless and praise we famous men —
Men of little showing!
For their work continueth
And their work continueth
Broad and deep continueth
Great beyond their knowing!

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"IN AMBUSH"

"IN AMBUSH"

IN summer all right-minded boys built huts in the furze-hill behind the College — little lairs whittled out of the heart of the prickly bushes, full of stumps, odd root-ends, and spikes, but, since they were strictly forbidden, palaces of delight. And for the fifth summer in succession, Stalky, McTurk, and Beetle (this was before they reached the dignity of a study) had built like beavers a place of retreat and meditation, where they smoked.

Now, there was nothing in their characters as known to Mr. Prout, their house-master, at all commanding respect; nor did Foxy, the subtle red-haired school Sergeant, trust them. His business was to wear tennis-shoes, carry binoculars, and swoop hawk-like upon evil boys. Had he taken the field alone, that hut would have been raided, for Foxy knew the manners of his quarry; but Providence moved Mr. Prout, whose school-name, derived from the size of his feet, was Hoofer, to investigate on his own account; and it was the

cautious Stalky who found the track of his pugs on the very floor of their lair one peaceful afternoon when Stalky would fain have forgotten Prout and his works in a volume of Surtees and a new brierwood pipe. Crusoe, at sight of the footprint, did not act more swiftly than Stalky. He removed the pipes, swept up all loose match-ends, and departed to warn Beetle and McTurk.

But it was characteristic of the boy that he did not approach his allies till he had met and conferred with little Hartopp, President of the Natural History Society, an institution which Stalky held in contempt. Hartopp was more than surprised when the boy meekly, as he knew how, begged to propose himself, Beetle, and McTurk as candidates; confessed to a long-smothered interest in first-flowerings, early butterflies, and new arrivals, and volunteered, if Mr. Hartopp saw fit, to enter on the new life at once. Being a master, Hartopp was suspicious; but he was also an enthusiast, and his gentle little soul had been galled by chance-heard remarks from the three, and specially Beetle. So he was gracious to that repentant sinner, and entered the three names in his book.

Then, and not till then, did Stalky seek Beetle and McTurk in their house form-room. They were stowing away books for a quiet afternoon in the furze, which they called the "wuzzy."

"All up," said Stalky, serenely. "I spotted

Heffy's fairy feet round our hut after dinner. 'Blessing they're so big."

"Con-found! Did you hide our pipes?" said Beetle.

"Oh, no. Left 'em in the middle of the hut, of course. What a blind ass you are, Beetle! D'you think nobody thinks but yourself? Well, we can't use the hut any more. Hoofer will be watchin' it."

"'Bother! Likewise blow!'" said McTurk, thoughtfully, unpacking the volumes with which his chest was cased. The boys carried their libraries between their belt and their collar. "Nice job! This means we're under suspicion for the rest of the term."

"Why? All that Heffy has found is *a* hut. He and Foxy will watch it. It's nothing to do with us; only we mustn't be seen that way for a bit."

"Yes, and where else are we to go?" said Beetle. "You chose that place, too — an' — an' I wanted to read this afternoon."

Stalky sat on a desk drumming his heels on the form.

"You're a despondin' brute, Beetle. Sometimes I think I shall have to drop you altogether. Did you ever know your Uncle Stalky forget you yet? *His rebus infectis* — after I'd seen Heffy's mantracks marchin' round our hut, I found little Har-

topp — *destricto ense* — wavin' a butterfly-net. I conciliated Hartopp. 'Told him that you'd read papers to the Bug-hunters if he'd let you join, Beetle. 'Told him you liked butterflies, Turkey. Anyhow, I soothed the Hartoffles, and we're Bug-hunters now."

"What's the good of that?" said Beetle.

"Oh, Turkey, kick him!"

In the interests of science bounds were largely relaxed for the members of the Natural History Society. They could wander, if they kept clear of all houses, practically where they chose; Mr. Hartopp holding himself responsible for their good conduct.

Beetle began to see this as McTurk began the kicking.

"I'm an ass, Stalky!" he said, guarding the afflicted part. "*Pax*, Turkey. I'm an ass."

"Don't stop, Turkey. Isn't your Uncle Stalky a great man?"

"Great man," said Beetle.

"All the same bug-huntin's a filthy business," said McTurk. "How the deuce does one begin?"

"This way," said Stalky, turning to some fags' lockers behind him. "Fags are dabs at Natural History. Here's young Braybrooke's botany-case." He flung out a tangle of decayed roots and adjusted the slide. "'Gives one no end of a professional air, I think. Here's Clay Minor's

geological hammer. Beetle can carry that. Turkey, you'd better covet a butterfly-net from somewhere."

"I'm blowed if I do," said McTurk, simply, with immense feeling. "Beetle, give me the hammer."

"All right. *I'm* not proud. Chuck us down that net on top of the lockers, Stalky."

"That's all right. It's a collapsible jamboree, too. Beastly luxurious dogs these fags are. Built like a fishin'-rod. 'Pon my sainted Sam, but we look the complete Bug-hunters! Now, listen to your Uncle Stalky! We're goin' along the cliffs after butterflies. Very few chaps come there. We're goin' to leg it, too. You'd better leave your book behind."

"Not much!" said Beetle, firmly. "I'm not goin' to be done out of my fun for a lot of filthy butterflies."

"Then you'll sweat horrid. You'd better carry my Jorrocks. 'Twon't make you any hotter."

They all sweated; for Stalky led them at a smart trot west away along the cliffs under the furze-hills, crossing combe after gorsy combe. They took no heed to flying rabbits or fluttering fritillaries, and all that Turkey said of geology was utterly unquotable.

"Are we going to Clovelly?" he puffed at last, and they flung themselves down on the short,

springy turf between the drone of the sea below and the light summer wind among the inland trees. They were looking into a combe half full of old, high furze in gay bloom that ran up to a fringe of brambles and a dense wood of mixed timber and hollies. It was as though one-half the combe were filled with golden fire to the cliff's edge. The side nearest to them was open grass, and fairly bristled with notice-boards.

"Fee-rocious old cove, this," said Stalky, reading the nearest. "'*Prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law. G. M. Dabney, Col., J. P.*,' an' all the rest of it. 'Don't seem to me that any chap in his senses would trespass here, does it?"

"You've got to prove damage 'fore you can prosecute for anything! 'Can't prosecute for trespass," said McTurk, whose father held many acres in Ireland. "That's all rot!"

"Glad of that, 'cause this looks like what we wanted. Not straight across, Beetle, you blind lunatic! Any one could spot us half a mile off. This way; and furl up your beastly butterfly-net."

Beetle disconnected the ring, thrust the net into a pocket, shut up the handle to a two-foot stave, and slid the cane-ring round his waist. Stalky led inland to the wood, which was, perhaps, a quarter of a mile from the sea, and reached the fringe of the brambles.

"*Now* we can get straight down through the

furze, and never show up at all," said the tactician. "Beetle, go ahead and explore. Snf! Snf! Beastly stink of fox somewhere!"

On all fours, save when he clung to his spectacles, Beetle wormed into the gorse, and presently announced between grunts of pain that he had found a very fair fox-track. This was well for Beetle, since Stalky pinched him *a tergo*. Down that tunnel they crawled. It was evidently a highway for the inhabitants of the combe; and, to their inexpressible joy, ended, at the very edge of the cliff, in a few square feet of dry turf walled and roofed with impenetrable gorse.

"By gum! There isn't a single thing to do except lie down," said Stalky, returning a knife to his pocket. "Look here!"

He parted the tough stems before him, and it was as a window opened on a far view of Lundy, and the deep sea sluggishly nosing the pebbles a couple of hundred feet below. They could hear young jackdaws squawking on the ledges, the hiss and jabber of a nest of hawks somewhere out of sight; and, with great deliberation, Stalky spat on to the back of a young rabbit sunning himself far down where only a cliff-rabbit could have found foothold. Great grey and black gulls screamed against the jackdaws; the heavy-scented acres of bloom round them were alive with low-nesting birds, singing or silent as the shadow of the wheel-

ing hawks passed and returned; and on the naked turf across the combe rabbits thumped and frolicked.

"Whew! What a place! Talk of Natural History; this is it," said Stalky, filling himself a pipe. "Isn't it scrumptious? Good old sea!" He spat again approvingly, and was silent.

McTurk and Beetle had taken out their books and were lying on their stomachs, chin in hand. The sea snored and gurgled; the birds, scattered for the moment by these new animals, returned to their businesses, and the boys read on in the rich, warm, sleepy silence.

"Hullo, here's a keeper," said Stalky, shutting "Handley Cross" cautiously, and peering through the jungle. A man with a gun appeared on the sky-line to the east. "Confound him, he's going to sit down."

"He'd swear we were poachin', too," said Beetle. "What's the good of pheasants' eggs? They're always addled, too."

"Might as well get up to the wood, *I* think," said Stalky. "We don't want G. M. Dabney, Col., J. P., to be bothered about us so soon. Up the wuzzy and keep quiet! He may have followed us, you know."

Beetle was already far up the tunnel. They heard him gasp indescribably: there was the crash of a heavy body leaping through the furze.

"Aie! yeou little red rascal. I see yeou!" The keeper threw the gun to his shoulder, and fired both barrels in their direction. The pellets dusted the dry stems round them as a big fox plunged between Stalky's legs and ran over the cliff-edge.

They said nothing till they reached the wood, torn, dishevelled, hot, but unseen.

"Narrow squeak," said Stalky. "I'll swear some of the pellets went through my hair."

"Did you see him?" said Beetle. "I almost put my hand on him. Wasn't he a whopper! Didn't he stink! Hullo, Turkey, what's the matter? Are you hit?"

McTurk's lean face had turned pearly white; his mouth, generally half open, was tight shut, and his eyes blazed. They had never seen him like this save once in a sad time of civil war.

"Do you know that that was just as bad as murder?" he said, in a grating voice, as he brushed prickles from his head.

"Well, he didn't hit us," said Stalky. "I think it was rather a lark. Here, where are you going?"

"I'm going up to the house, if there is one," said McTurk, pushing through the hollies. "I am going to tell this Colonel Dabney."

"Are you crazy? He'll swear it served us jolly well right. He'll report us. It'll be a pub-

lic lickin'. Oh, Turkey, don't be an ass! Think of us!"

"You fool!" said McTurk, turning savagely. "D'you suppose I'm thinkin' of *us?* It's the keeper."

"He's cracked," said Beetle, miserably, as they followed. Indeed, this was a new Turkey — a haughty, angular, nose-lifted Turkey — whom they accompanied through a shrubbery on to a lawn, where a white-whiskered old gentleman with a cleek was alternately putting and blaspheming vigorously.

"Are you Colonel Dabney?" McTurk began in this new creaking voice of his.

"I — I am, and —" his eyes travelled up and down the boy — "who — what the devil d'you want? Ye've been disturbing my pheasants. Don't attempt to deny it. Ye needn't laugh at it." (McTurk's not too lovely features had twisted themselves into a horrible sneer at the word pheasant.) "You've been birds'-nesting. You needn't hide your hat. I can see that you belong to the College. Don't attempt to deny it. Ye do! Your name and number at once, sir. Ye want to speak to me — Eh? You saw my notice-boards? Must have. Don't attempt to deny it. Ye did! Damnable! Oh, damnable!"

He choked with emotion. McTurk's heel tapped the lawn and he stuttered a little — two

sure signs that he was losing his temper. But why should he, the offender, be angry?

"Lo-look here, sir. Do — do you shoot foxes? Because, if you don't, your keeper does. We've seen him! I do-don't care what you call us — but it's an awful thing. It's the ruin of good feelin' among neighbours. A ma-man ought to say once and for all how he stands about preservin'. It's worse than murder, because there's no legal remedy." McTurk was quoting confusedly from his father, while the old gentleman made noises in his throat.

"Do you know who I am?" he gurgled at last; Stalky and Beetle quaking.

"No, sorr, nor do I care if ye belonged to the Castle itself. Answer me now, as one gentleman to another. Do ye shoot foxes or do ye not?"

And four years before Stalky and Beetle had carefully kicked McTurk out of his Irish dialect! Assuredly he had gone mad or taken a sunstroke, and as assuredly he would be slain — once by the old gentleman and once by the Head. A public licking for the three was the least they could expect. Yet — if their eyes and ears were to be trusted — the old gentleman had collapsed. It might be a lull before the storm, but —

"I do not." He was still gurgling.

"Then you must sack your keeper. He's not

fit to live in the same county with a God-fearin' fox. An' a vixen, too — at this time o' year!"

"Did ye come up on purpose to tell me this?"

"Of course I did, ye silly man," with a stamp of the foot. "Would you not have done as much for me if you'd seen that thing happen on my land, now?"

Forgotten — forgotten was the College and the decency due to elders! McTurk was treading again the barren purple mountains of the rainy West coast, where in his holidays he was viceroy of four thousand naked acres, only son of a three-hundred-year-old house, lord of a crazy fishing-boat, and the idol of his father's shiftless tenantry. It was the landed man speaking to his equal — deep calling to deep — and the old gentleman acknowledged the cry.

"I apologise," said he. "I apologise unreservedly — to you, and to the Old Country. Now, will you be good enough to tell me your story?"

"We were in your combe," McTurk began, and he told his tale alternately as a schoolboy and, when the iniquity of the thing overcame him, as an indignant squire; concluding: "So you see he must be in the habit of it. I — we — one never wants to accuse a neighbour's man; but I took the liberty in this case —"

"I see. Quite so. For a reason ye had. Infamous — oh, infamous!" The two had fallen

into step beside each other on the lawn, and Colonel Dabney was talking as one man to another. "This comes of promoting a fisherman — a fisherman — from his lobster-pots. It's enough to ruin the reputation of an archangel. Don't attempt to deny it. It is! Your father has brought you up well. He has. I'd much like the pleasure of his acquaintance. Very much, indeed. And these young gentlemen? English they are. Don't attempt to deny it. They came up with you, too? Extraordinary! Extraordinary, now! In the present state of education I shouldn't have thought any three boys would be well enough grounded. . . . But out of the mouths of — No — no! Not that by any odds. Don't attempt to deny it. Ye're not! Sherry always catches me under the liver, but — beer, now? Eh? What d'you say to beer, and something to eat? It's long since I was a boy — abominable nuisances; but exceptions prove the rule. And a vixen, too!"

They were fed on the terrace by a grey-haired housekeeper. Stalky and Beetle merely ate, but McTurk with bright eyes continued a free and lofty discourse; and ever the old gentleman treated him as a brother.

"My dear man, of *course* ye can come again. Did I not say exceptions prove the rule? The lower combe? Man, dear, anywhere ye please, so long as you do not disturb my pheasants. The

two are not incompatible. Don't attempt to deny it. They're not! I'll never allow another gun, though. Come and go as ye please. I'll not see you, and ye needn't see me. Ye've been well brought up. Another glass of beer, now? I tell you a fisherman he was and a fisherman he shall be to-night again. He shall! Wish I could drown him. I'll convoy you to the Lodge. My people are not precisely — ah — broke to boy, but they'll know *you* again."

He dismissed them with many compliments by the high Lodge-gate in the split-oak park palings, and they stood still; even Stalky, who had played second, not to say a dumb, fiddle, regarding McTurk as one from another world. The two glasses of strong home-brewed had brought a melancholy upon the boy, for, slowly strolling with his hands in his pockets, he crooned:—"Oh, Paddy dear, and did ye hear the news that's goin' round?"

Under other circumstances Stalky and Beetle would have fallen upon him, for that song was barred utterly — anathema — the sin of witchcraft. But seeing what he had wrought, they danced round him in silence, waiting till it pleased him to touch earth.

The tea-bell rang when they were still half a mile from College. McTurk shivered and came out of dreams. The glory of his holiday estate

had left him. He was a Colleger of the College, speaking English once more.

"Turkey, it was immense!" said Stalky, generously. "I didn't know you had it in you. You've got us a hut for the rest of the term, where we simply *can't* be collared. Fids! Fids! Oh, Fids! I gloat! Hear me gloat!"

They spun wildly on their heels, jodelling after the accepted manner of a "gloat," which is not unremotely allied to the primitive man's song of triumph, and dropped down the hill by the path from the gasometer just in time to meet their housemaster, who had spent the afternoon watching their abandoned hut in the "wuzzy."

Unluckily, all Mr. Prout's imagination leaned to the darker side of life, and he looked on those young-eyed cherubims most sourly. Boys that he understood attended house-matches and could be accounted for at any moment. But he had heard McTurk openly deride cricket — even house-matches; Beetle's views on the honour of the house he knew were incendiary; and he could never tell when the soft and smiling Stalky was laughing at him. Consequently — since human nature is what it is — those boys had been doing wrong somewhere. He hoped it was nothing very serious, but . . .

"*Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu!* I gloat. Hear me!" Stalky, still on his heels, whirled like a dancing dervish to the dining-hall.

"*Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu!* I gloat! Hear me!" Beetle spun behind him with outstretched arms.

"*Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu!* I gloat! Hear me!" McTurk's voice cracked.

Now was there or was there not a distinct flavour of beer as they shot past Mr. Prout?

He was unlucky in that his conscience as a house-master impelled him to consult his associates. Had he taken his pipe and his troubles to little Hartopp's rooms he would, perhaps, have been saved confusion, for Hartopp believed in boys, and knew something about them. His fate led him to King, a fellow house-master, no friend of his, but a zealous hater of Stalky & Co.

"Ah-haa!" said King, rubbing his hands when the tale was told. "Curious! Now *my* house never dreamed of doing these things."

"But you see I've no proof, exactly."

"Proof? With the egregious Beetle! As if one wanted it! I suppose it is not impossible for the Sergeant to supply it? Foxy is considered at least a match for any evasive boy in my house. Of course they were smoking and drinking somewhere. That type of boy always does. They think it manly."

"But they've no following in the school, and they are distinctly — er — brutal to their juniors," said Prout, who had from a distance seen Beetle return, with interest, his butterfly-net to a tearful fag.

"Ah! They consider themselves superior to ordinary delights. Self-sufficient little animals! There's something in McTurk's Hibernian sneer that would make *me* a little annoyed. And they are so careful to avoid all overt acts, too. It's sheer calculated insolence. I am strongly opposed, as you know, to interfering with another man's house; but they need a lesson, Prout. They need a sharp lesson, if only to bring down their overweening self-conceit. Were I you, I should devote myself for a week to their little performances. Boys of that order — and I may flatter myself, but I think I know boys — don't join the Bug-hunters for love. Tell the Sergeant to keep his eye open; and, of course, in my peregrinations I may casually keep mine open, too."

"*Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu!* I gloat! Hear me!" far down the corridor.

"Disgusting!" said King. "Where do they pick up these obscene noises? One sharp lesson is what they want."

The boys did not concern themselves with lessons for the next few days. They had all Colonel Dabney's estate to play with, and they explored it with the stealth of Red Indians and the accuracy of burglars. They could enter either by the Lodge-gates on the upper road — they were careful to ingratiate themselves with the Lodge-keeper and his wife — drop down into the combe, and

return along the cliffs; or they could begin at the combe, and climb up into the road.

They were careful not to cross the Colonel's path — he had served his turn, and they would not outwear their welcome — nor did they show up on the sky-line when they could move in cover. The shelter of the gorse by the cliff-edge was their chosen retreat. Beetle christened it the Pleasant Isle of Aves, for the peace and the shelter of it; and here, the pipes and tobacco once cachéd in a convenient ledge an arm's length down the cliff, their position was legally unassailable.

For, observe, Colonel Dabney had not invited them to enter his house. Therefore, they did not need to ask specific leave to go visiting; and school rules were strict on that point. He had merely thrown open his grounds to them; and, since they were lawful Bug-hunters, their extended bounds ran up to his notice-boards in the combe and his Lodge-gates on the hill.

They were amazed at their own virtue.

"And even if it wasn't," said Stalky, flat on his back, staring into the blue. "Even suppose we were miles out of bounds, no one could get at us through this wuzzy, unless he knew the tunnel. Isn't this better than lyin' up just behind the Coll — in a blue funk every time we had a smoke? Isn't your Uncle Stalky — "

"No," said Beetle — he was stretched at the

edge of the cliff spitting thoughtfully. "We've got to thank Turkey for this. Turkey is the Great Man. Turkey, dear, you're distressing Heffles."

"Gloomy old ass!" said McTurk, deep in a book.

"They've got us under suspicion," said Stalky. "Hoophats *is* so suspicious somehow; and Foxy always makes every stalk he does a sort of — sort of —"

"Scalp," said Beetle. "Foxy's a giddy Chingangook."

"Poor Foxy," said Stalky. "He's goin' to catch us one of these days. 'Said to me in the Gym last night, 'I've got my eye on you, Mister Corkran. I'm only warning you for your good.' Then I said: 'Well, you jolly well take it off again, or you'll get into trouble. I'm only warnin' you for your good.' Foxy was wrath."

"Yes, but it's only fair sport for Foxy," said Beetle. "It's Hefflelinga that has the evil mind. 'Shouldn't wonder if he thought we got tight."

"I never got squiffy but once — that was in the holidays," said Stalky, reflectively; "an' it made me horrid sick. 'Pon my sacred Sam, though, it's enough to drive a man to drink, havin' an animal like Hoof for house-master."

"If we attended the matches an' yelled, 'Well hit, sir,' an' stood on one leg an' grinned every

time Heffy said, 'So ho, my sons. Is it thus?' an' said, 'Yes, sir,' an' 'No, sir,' an' 'O, sir,' an' 'Please, sir,' like a lot o' filthy fa-ags, Heffy 'ud think no end of us," said McTurk, with a sneer.

"Too late to begin that."

"It's all right. The Hefflelinga means well. *But* he is an ass. *And* we show him that we think he's an ass. An' *so* Heffy don't love us. 'Told me last night after prayers that he was *in loco parentis*," Beetle grunted.

"The deuce he did!" cried Stalky. "That means he's maturin' something unusual dam' mean. Last time he told me that he gave me three hundred lines for dancin' the cachucha in Number Ten dormitory. *Loco parentis*, by gum! But what's the odds as long as you're 'appy? *We're* all right."

They were, and their very rightness puzzled Prout, King, and the Sergeant. Boys with bad consciences show it. They slink out past the Fives Court in haste, and smile nervously when questioned. They return, disordered, in bare time to save a call-over. They nod and wink and giggle one to the other, scattering at the approach of a master. But Stalky and his allies had long outlived these manifestations of youth. They strolled forth unconcernedly, and returned in excellent shape after a light refreshment of strawberries and cream at the Lodge.

The Lodge-keeper had been promoted to keeper, *vice* the murderous fisherman, and his wife made much of the boys. The man, too, gave them a squirrel, which they presented to the Natural History Society; thereby checkmating little Hartopp, who wished to know what they were doing for Science. Foxy faithfully worked some deep Devon lanes behind a lonely cross-roads inn; and it was curious that Prout and King, members of Common-room seldom friendly, walked together in the same direction — that is to say, northeast. Now, the Pleasant Isle of Aves lay due southwest.

"They're deep — day-vilish deep," said Stalky. "Why are they drawin' those covers?"

"Me," said Beetle, sweetly. "I asked Foxy if he had ever tasted the beer there. That was enough for Foxy, and it cheered him up a little. He and Heffy were sniffin' round our old hut so long I thought they'd like a change."

"Well, it can't last for ever," said Stalky. "Heffy's bankin' up like a thunder-cloud, an' King goes rubbin' his beastly hands, an' grinnin' like a hyena. It's shockin' demoralisin' for King. He'll burst some day."

That day came a little sooner than they expected — came when the Sergeant, whose duty it was to collect defaulters, did not attend an afternoon call-over.

"Tired of pubs, eh? He's gone up to the top of the hill with his binoculars to spot us," said Stalky. "Wonder he didn't think of that before. Did you see old Heffy cock his eye at us when we answered our names? Heffy's in it, too. *Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu!* I gloat! Hear me! Come on!"

"Aves?" said Beetle.

"Of course, but I'm not smokin' *aujourd'hui. Parce que je* jolly well *pense* that we'll be *suivi.* We'll go along the cliffs, slow, an' give Foxy lots of time to parallel us up above."

They strolled towards the swimming-baths, and presently overtook King.

"Oh, don't let *me* interrupt you," he said. "Engaged in scientific pursuits, of course? I trust you will enjoy yourselves, my young friends."

"You see!" said Stalky, when they were out of ear-shot. "He *can't* keep a secret. He's followin' to cut off our line of retreat. He'll wait at the baths till Heffy comes along. They've tried every blessed place except along the cliffs, and now they think they've bottled us. No need to hurry."

They walked leisurely over the combes till they reached the line of notice-boards.

"Listen a shake. Foxy's up wind comin' downhill like beans. When you hear him move in the bushes, go straight across to Aves. They want to catch us *flagrante delicto.*"

They dived into the gorse at right angles to the tunnel, openly crossing the grass, and lay still in Aves.

"What did I tell you?" Stalky carefully put away the pipes and tobacco. The Sergeant, out of breath, was leaning against the fence, raking the furze with his binoculars, but he might as well have tried to see through a sand-bag. Anon, Prout and King appeared behind him. They conferred.

"Aha! Foxy don't like the notice-boards, and he don't like the prickles either. Now we'll cut up the tunnel and go to the Lodge. Hullo! They've sent Foxy into cover."

The Sergeant was waist-deep in crackling, swaying furze, his ears filled with the noise of his own progress. The boys reached the shelter of the wood, and looked down through a belt of hollies.

"Hellish noise!" said Stalky, critically. "'Don't think Colonel Dabney will like it. I move we go into the Lodge and get something to eat. We might as well see the fun out."

Suddenly the keeper passed them at a trot.

"Who'm they to combe-bottom for Lard's sake? Master'll be crazy," he said.

"Poachers simly," Stalky replied in the broad Devon that was the boy's *langue de guerre.*

"I'll poach 'em to raights!" He dropped into the funnel-like combe, which presently began to

fill with noises, notably King's voice crying: "Go on, Sergeant! Leave him alone, you, sir. He is executing *my* orders."

"Who'm yeou to give arders here, gingy whiskers? Yeou come up to the master. Come out o' that wuzzy! [This is to the Sergeant.] Yiss, I reckon us knows the boys yeou'm after. They've tu long ears an' vuzzy bellies, an' you nippies they in yeour pockets when they'm dead. Come on up to master! He'll boy yeou all yeou'm a mind to. Yeou other folk bide your side fence."

"Explain to the proprietor. You can explain, Sergeant," shouted King. Evidently the Sergeant had surrendered to the major force.

Beetle lay at full length on the turf behind the Lodge, literally biting the earth in spasms of joy.

Stalky kicked him upright. There was nothing of levity about Stalky or McTurk save a stray muscle twitching on the cheek.

They tapped at the Lodge-door, where they were always welcome.

"Come yeou right in an' set down, my little dearrs," said the woman. "They'll niver touch my man. He'll poach 'em to rights. Iss fai! Fresh berries an' cream. Us Dartymoor folk niver forgit their friends. But them Bidevor poachers, they've no hem to their garments. Sugar? My man he've digged a badger for yeou, my dearrs. 'Tis in the linhay in a box."

"Us'll take un with us when we'm finished here. I reckon yeou'm busy. We'll bide here an'—'tis washin' day with yeou, simly," said Stalky. "We'm no company to make all vitty for. Never yeou mind us. Yiss. There's plenty cream."

The woman withdrew, wiping her pink hands on her apron, and left them in the parlor. There was a scuffle of feet on the gravel outside the heavily leaded diamond panes, and then the voice of Colonel Dabney, something clearer than a bugle.

"Ye can read? You've eyes in your head? Don't attempt to deny it. Ye have!"

Beetle snatched a crochet-work antimacassar from the shiny horsehair sofa, stuffed it into his mouth, and rolled out of sight.

"You saw my notice-boards. Your duty? Curse your impudence, sir. Your duty was to keep off my grounds. Talk of duty to *me!* Why — why — why, ye misbegotten poacher, ye'll be teachin' me my A B C next! Roarin' like a bull in the bushes down there! Boys? Boys? Boys? Keep your boys at home, then! *I'm* not responsible for your boys! But I don't believe it — I don't believe a word of it. Ye've a furtive look in your eye — a furtive, sneakin', poachin' look in your eye, that 'ud ruin the reputation of an archangel! Don't attempt to deny it! Ye have! A sergeant? More shame to you, then, an' the worst bargain Her Majesty ever made! A ser-

geant, to run about the country poachin'—on your pension! Damnable! Oh, damnable! But I'll be considerate. I'll be merciful. By gad, I'll be the very essence o' humanity! Did ye, or did ye not, see my notice-boards? Don't attempt to deny it! Ye did. Silence, Sergeant!"

Twenty-one years in the army had left their mark on Foxy. He obeyed.

"Now. March!"

The high Lodge-gate shut with a clang. "My duty! A sergeant to tell me my duty!" puffed Colonel Dabney. "Good Lard! more sergeants!"

"It's King! It's King!" gulped Stalky, his head on the horsehair pillow. McTurk was eating the rag-carpet before the speckless hearth, and the sofa heaved to the emotions of Beetle. Through the thick glass the figures without showed blue, distorted, and menacing.

"I — I protest against this outrage." King had evidently been running uphill. "The man was entirely within his duty. Let — let me give you my card."

"He's in flannels!" Stalky buried his head again.

"Unfortunately — *most* unfortunately — I have not one with me, but my name is King, sir, a house-master of the College, and you will find me prepared — fully prepared — to answer for this man's action. We've seen three—"

"*Did* ye see my notice-boards?"

"I admit we did; but under the circumstances—"

"I stand *in loco parentis*." Prout's deep voice was added to the discussion. They could hear him pant.

"F'what?" Colonel Dabney was growing more and more Irish.

"I'm responsible for the boys under my charge."

"Ye are, are ye? Then all I can say is that ye set them a very bad example — a dam' bad example, if I may say so. I do not own your boys. I've not seen your boys, an' I tell you that if there was a boy grinnin' in every bush on the place, *still* ye've no shadow of a right here, comin' up from the combe that way, an' frightenin' everything in it. Don't attempt to deny it. Ye did. Ye should have come to the Lodge an' seen me like Christians, instead of chasin' your dam' boys through the length and breadth of my covers. *In loco parentis* ye are? Well, I've not forgotten my Latin either, an' I'll say to you: '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes.*' If the masters trespass, how can we blame the boys?"

"But if I could speak to you privately," said Prout.

"I'll have nothing private with you! Ye can be as private as ye please on the other side o' that gate an' — I wish ye a very good afternoon."

A second time the gate clanged. They waited till Colonel Dabney had returned to the house, and fell into one another's arms, crowing for breath.

"Oh, my Soul! Oh, my King! Oh, my Heffy! Oh, my Foxy! Zeal, all zeal, Mr. Simple." Stalky wiped his eyes. "Oh! Oh! Oh!—'I *did* boil the exciseman!' We must get out of this or we'll be late for tea."

"Ge-ge-get the badger and make little Hartopp happy. Ma-ma-make 'em all happy," sobbed McTurk, groping for the door and kicking the prostrate Beetle before him.

They found the beast in an evil-smelling box, left two half-crowns for payment, and staggered home. Only the badger grunted most marvellous like Colonel Dabney, and they dropped him twice or thrice with shrieks of helpless laughter. They were but imperfectly recovered when Foxy met them by the Fives Court with word that they were to go up to their dormitory and wait till sent for.

"Well, take this box to Mr. Hartopp's rooms, then. We've done something for the Natural History Society, at any rate," said Beetle.

"'Fraid that won't save you, young gen'elmen," Foxy answered, in an awful voice. He was sorely ruffled in his mind.

"All sereno, Foxibus." Stalky had reached the extreme stage of hiccups. "We—we'll never desert you, Foxy. Hounds choppin' foxes in cover

is more a proof of vice, ain't it? . . . No, you're right. I'm — I'm not quite well."

"They've gone a bit too far this time," Foxy thought to himself. "Very far gone, *I'd* say, excep' there was no smell of liquor. An' yet it isn't like 'em — somehow. King and Prout they 'ad their dressin'-down same as me. That's one comfort."

"Now, we must pull up," said Stalky, rising from the bed on which he had thrown himself. "We're injured innocence — as usual. *We* don't know what we've been sent up here for, do we?"

"No explanation. Deprived of tea. Public disgrace before the house," said McTurk, whose eyes were running over. "It's dam' serious."

"Well, hold on, till King loses his temper," said Beetle. "He's a libellous old rip, an' he'll be in a ravin' paddywhack. Prout's too beastly cautious. Keep your eye on King, and, if he gives us a chance, appeal to the Head. That always makes 'em sick."

They were summoned to their house-master's study, King and Foxy supporting Prout, and Foxy had three canes under his arm. King leered triumphantly, for there were tears, undried tears of mirth, on the boys' cheeks. Then the examination began.

Yes, they had walked along the cliffs. Yes, they had entered Colonel Dabney's grounds. Yes, they

had seen the notice-boards (at this point Beetle sputtered hysterically). For what purpose had they entered Colonel Dabney's grounds? "Well, sir, there was a badger."

Here King, who loathed the Natural History Society because he did not like Hartopp, could no longer be restrained. He begged them not to add mendacity to open insolence. But the badger was in Mr. Hartopp's rooms, sir. The Sergeant had kindly taken it up for them. That disposed of the badger, and the temporary check brought King's temper to boiling-point. They could hear his foot on the floor while Prout prepared his lumbering inquiries. They had settled into their stride now. Their eyes ceased to sparkle; their faces were blank; their hands hung beside them without a twitch. They were learning, at the expense of a fellow-countryman, the lesson of their race, which is to put away all emotion and entrap the alien at the proper time.

So far good. King was importing himself more freely into the trial, being vengeful where Prout was grieved. They knew the penalties of trespassing? With a fine show of irresolution, Stalky admitted that he had gathered some information vaguely bearing on this head, but he thought — The sentence was dragged out to the uttermost: Stalky did not wish to play his trump with such an opponent. Mr. King de-

sired no buts, nor was he interested in Stalky's evasions. They, on the other hand, might be interested in his poor views. Boys who crept — who sneaked — who lurked — out of bounds, even the generous bounds of the Natural History Society, which they had falsely joined as a cloak for their misdeeds — their vices — their villainies — their immoralities —

"He 'll break cover in a minute," said Stalky to himself. "Then we'll run into him before he gets away."

Such boys, scabrous boys, moral lepers — the current of his words was carrying King off his feet — evil-speakers, liars, slow-bellies — yea, incipient drunkards . . .

He was merely working up to a peroration, and the boys knew it; but McTurk cut through the frothing sentence, the others echoing:

"I appeal to the Head, sir."

"I appeal to the Head, sir."

"I appeal to the Head, sir."

It was their unquestioned right. Drunkenness meant expulsion after a public flogging. They had been accused of it. The case was the Head's, and the Head's alone.

"Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar: unto Cæsar shalt thou go." They had heard that sentence once or twice before in their careers. "None the less," said King, uneasily, "you would be better

advised to abide by our decision, my young friends."

"Are we allowed to associate with the rest of the school till we see the Head, sir?" said McTurk to his house-master, disregarding King. This at once lifted the situation to its loftiest plane. Moreover, it meant no word, for moral leprosy was strictly quarantined, and the Head never executed judgment till twenty-four cold hours later.

"Well — er — if you persist in your defiant attitude," said King, with a loving look at the canes under Foxy's arm. "There is no alternative."

Ten minutes later the news was over the whole school. Stalky & Co. had fallen at last — fallen by drink. They had been drinking. They had returned blind-drunk from a hut. They were even now lying hopelessly intoxicated on the dormitory floor. A few bold spirits crept up to look, and received boots about the head from the criminals.

"We've got him — got him on the Caudine Toasting-Fork!" said Stalky, after those hints were taken. "King'll have to prove his charges up to the giddy hilt."

"Too much ticklee, him bust," Beetle quoted from a book of his reading. "Didn't I say he'd go pop if we lat un bide?"

"No prep., either, O ye incipient drunkards," said McTurk, "and it's trig night, too. Hullo! Here's our dear friend Foxy. More tortures, Foxibus?"

"I've brought you something to eat, young gentlemen," said the Sergeant from behind a crowded tray. Their wars had ever been waged without malice, and a suspicion floated in Foxy's mind that boys who allowed themselves to be tracked so easily might, perhaps, hold something in reserve. Foxy had served through the Mutiny, when early and accurate information was worth much.

"I — I noticed you 'adn't 'ad anything to eat, an' I spoke to Gumbly, an' he said you wasn't exactly cut off from supplies. So I brought up this. It's your potted 'am tin, ain't it, Mr. Corkran?"

"Why, Foxibus, you're a brick," said Stalky. "I didn't think you had this much — what's the word, Beetle?"

"Bowels," Beetle replied promptly. "Thank you, Sergeant. That's young Carter's potted ham, though."

"There was a C on it. I thought it was Mr. Corkran's. This is a very serious business, young gentlemen. That's what it is. I didn't know, perhaps, but there might be something on your side which you hadn't said to Mr. King or Mr. Prout, maybe."

"There is. Heaps, Foxibus." This from Stalky through a full mouth.

"Then you see, if that was the case, it seemed to me I might represent it, quiet so to say, to the 'Ead when he asks me about it. I've got to take 'im the charges to-night, an'—it looks bad on the face of it."

"'Trocious bad, Foxy. Twenty-seven cuts in the Gym before all the school, and public expulsion. 'Wine is a mocker, strong drink is ragin','" quoth Beetle.

"It's nothin' to make fun of, young gentlemen. I 'ave to go to the 'Ead with the charges. An'—an' you mayn't be aware, per'aps, that I was followin' you this afternoon; havin' my suspicions."

"Did ye see the notice-boards?" croaked McTurk, in the very brogue of Colonel Dabney.

"Ye've eyes in your head. Don't attempt to deny it. Ye did!" said Beetle.

"A sergeant! To run about poachin' on your pension! Damnable! Oh, damnable!" said Stalky, without pity.

"Good Lord!" said the Sergeant, sitting heavily upon a bed. "Where—where the devil *was* you? I might ha' known it was a do—somewhere."

"Oh, you clever maniac!" Stalky resumed. "We mayn't be aware you were followin' us this afternoon, mayn't we? 'Thought you were stalk-

in' us, eh? Why, we led you bung into it, of course. Colonel Dabney — don't you think he's a nice man, Foxy? — Colonel Dabney's our pet particular friend. We've been goin' there for weeks and weeks. He invited us. You and your duty! Curse your duty, sir! Your duty was to keep off his covers."

"You'll never be able to hold up your head again, Foxy. The fags'll hoot at you," said Beetle. "Think of your giddy prestige!"

The Sergeant was thinking — hard.

"Look 'ere, young gentlemen," he said earnestly. "You aren't surely ever goin' to tell, are you? Wasn't Mr. Prout and Mr. King in — in it too?"

"Foxibusculus, they *was*. They was — singular horrid. Caught it worse than you. We heard every word of it. You got off easy, considerin'. If I'd been Dabney I swear I'd ha' quodded you. I think I'll suggest it to him to-morrow."

"An' it's all goin' up to the 'Ead. Oh, Good Lord!"

"Every giddy word of it, my Chingangook," said Beetle, dancing. "Why shouldn't it? *We've* done nothing wrong. *We* ain't poachers. *We* didn't cut about blastin' the characters of poor, innocent boys — sayin' they were drunk."

"That I didn't," said Foxy. "I — I only said that you be'aved uncommon odd when you come

back with that badger. Mr. King may have taken the wrong hint from that."

"'Course he did; an' he'll jolly well shove all the blame on you when he finds out he's wrong. We know King, if you don't. I'm ashamed of you. You ain't fit to be a sergeant," said McTurk.

"Not with three thorough-goin' young devils like you, I ain't. I've been had. I've been ambuscaded. Horse, foot, an' guns, I've been had, an'—an' there'll be no holdin' the junior forms after this. M'r'over, the 'Ead will send me with a note to Colonel Dabney to ask if what you say about bein' invited was true."

"Then you'd better go in by the Lodge-gates this time, instead of chasin' your dam' boys—oh, that was the Epistle to King—so it was. We-el, Foxy?" Stalky put his chin on his hands and regarded the victim with deep delight.

"*Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu!* I gloat! Hear me!" said McTurk. "Foxy brought us tea when we were moral lepers. Foxy has a heart. Foxy has been in the Army, too."

"I wish I'd ha' had you in my company, young gentlemen," said the Sergeant from the depths of his heart; "I'd ha' given you something."

"Silence at drum-head court-martial," McTurk went on. "I'm advocate for the prisoner; and, besides, this is much too good to tell all the other brutes in the Coll. They'd *never* understand.

They play cricket, and say: 'Yes, sir,' and 'O, sir,' and 'No, sir.'"

"Never mind that. Go ahead," said Stalky.

"Well. Foxy's a good little chap when he does not esteem himself so as to be clever."

"'Take not out your 'ounds on a werry windy day,'" Stalky struck in. "*I* don't care if you let him off."

"Nor me," said Beetle. "Heffy is my only joy — Heffy and King."

"I 'ad to do it," said the Sergeant, plaintively.

"Right, O! Led away by bad companions in the execution of his duty or — or words to that effect. You're dismissed with a reprimand, Foxy. *We* won't tell about *you*. I swear we won't," McTurk concluded. "Bad for the discipline of the school. Horrid bad."

"Well," said the Sergeant, gathering up the tea-things, "knowin' what I know o' the young dev — gentlemen of the College, I'm very glad to 'ear it. But what am I to tell the 'Ead?"

"Anything you jolly well please, Foxy. *We* aren't the criminals."

To say that the Head was annoyed when the Sergeant appeared after dinner with the day's crime-sheet would be putting it mildly.

"Corkran, McTurk & Co., I see. Bounds as usual. Hullo! What the deuce is this? Suspicion of drinking. Whose charge?"

"Mr. King's, sir. I caught 'em out of bounds, sir; at least that was 'ow it looked. But there's a lot be'ind, sir." The Sergeant was evidently troubled.

"Go on," said the Head. "Let us have your version.

He and the Sergeant had dealt with one another for some seven years; and the Head knew that Mr. King's statements depended very largely on Mr. King's temper.

"I thought they were out of bounds along the cliffs. But it come out they wasn't, sir. I saw them go into Colonel Dabney's woods, and — Mr. King and Mr. Prout come along — and — the fact was, sir, we was mistook for poachers by Colonel Dabney's people — Mr. King and Mr. Prout and me. There was some words, sir, on both sides. The young gentlemen slipped 'ome somehow, and they seemed 'ighly humorous, sir. Mr. King was mistook by Colonel Dabney himself — Colonel Dabney bein' strict. Then they preferred to come straight to you, sir, on account of what — what Mr. King may 'ave said about their 'abits afterwards in Mr. Prout's study. I only said they was 'ighly humorous, laughin' an' gigglin', an' a bit above 'emselves. They've since told me, sir, in a humorous way, that they was invited by Colonel Dabney to go into 'is woods."

"I see. They didn't tell their house-master that, of course."

"They took up Mr. King on appeal just as soon as he spoke about their — 'abits. Put in the appeal at once, sir, an' asked to be sent to the dormitory waitin' for you. I've since gathered, sir, in their humorous way, sir, that some'ow or other they've 'eard about every word Colonel Dabney said to Mr. King and Mr. Prout when he mistook 'em for poachers. I — I might ha' known when they led me on so that they 'eld the inner line of communications. It's — it's a plain do, sir, if you ask *me;* an' they're gloatin' over it in the dormitory."

The Head saw — saw even to the uttermost farthing — and his mouth twitched a little under his moustache.

"Send them to me at once, Sergeant. This case needn't wait over."

"Good evening," said he when the three appeared under escort. "I want your undivided attention for a few minutes. You've known me for five years, and I've known you for — twenty-five. I think we understand one another perfectly. I am now going to pay you a tremendous compliment (the brown one, please, Sergeant. Thanks. You needn't wait). I'm going to execute you without rhyme, Beetle, or reason. I know you went to Colonel Dabney's covers because you were invited. I'm not even going to send the Sergeant with a note to ask if your statement is true; be-

cause I am convinced that on this occasion you have adhered strictly to the truth. I know, too, that you were not drinking. (You can take off that virtuous expression, McTurk, or I shall begin to fear you don't understand me.) There is not a flaw in any of your characters. And that is why I am going to perpetrate a howling injustice. Your reputations have been injured, haven't they? You have been disgraced before the house, haven't you? You have a peculiarly keen regard for the honour of your house, haven't you? Well, *now* I am going to lick you."

Six apiece was their portion upon that word.

"And this I think" — the Head replaced the cane, and flung the written charge into the waste-paper basket — "covers the situation. When you find a variation from the normal — this will be useful to you in later life — always meet him in an abnormal way. And that reminds me. There are a pile of paper-backs on that shelf. You can borrow them if you put them back. I don't think they'll take any harm from being read in the open. They smell of tobacco rather. You will go to prep. this evening as usual. Good night," said that amazing man.

"Good night, and thank you, sir."

"I swear I'll pray for the Head to-night," said Beetle. "Those last two cuts were just flicks on my collar. There's a 'Monte Cristo' in that

lower shelf. I saw it. Bags I, next time we go to Aves!"

"Dearr man!" said McTurk. "No gating. No impots. No beastly questions. All settled. Hullo! what's King goin' in to him for — King and Prout?"

Whatever the nature of that interview, it did not improve either King's or Prout's ruffled plumes, for, when they came out of the Head's house, six eyes noted that the one was red and blue with emotion as to his nose, and that the other was sweating profusely. That sight compensated them amply for the Imperial Jaw with which they were favoured by the two. It seems — and who so astonished as they? — that they had held back material facts; that they were guilty both of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* (well-known gods against whom they often offended); further, that they were malignant in their dispositions, untrustworthy in their characters, pernicious and revolutionary in their influences, abandoned to the devils of wilfulness, pride, and a most intolerable conceit. Ninthly, and lastly, they were to have a care and to be very careful.

They were careful, as only boys can be when there is a hurt to be inflicted. They waited through one suffocating week till Prout and King were their royal selves again; waited till there was a house-match — their own house, too — in which Prout was taking part; waited, further, till he had

buckled on his pads in the pavilion and stood ready to go forth. King was scoring at the window, and the three sat on a bench without.

Said Stalky to Beetle: "I say, Beetle, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*"

"Don't ask me," said Beetle. "I'll have nothin' private with you. Ye can be as private as ye please the other end of the bench; and I wish ye a very good afternoon."

McTurk yawned.

"Well, ye should ha' come up to the Lodge like Christians instead o' chasin' your — a-hem — boys through the length an' breadth of my covers. *I* think these house-matches are all rot. Let's go over to Colonel Dabney's an' see if he's collared any more poachers."

That afternoon there was joy in Aves.

SLAVES OF THE LAMP

SLAVES OF THE LAMP

THE music-room on the top floor of Number Five was filled with the "Aladdin" company at rehearsal. Dickson Quartus, commonly known as Dick Four, was Aladdin, stage-manager, ballet-master, half the orchestra, and largely librettist, for the "book" had been rewritten and filled with local allusions. The pantomime was to be given next week, in the down-stairs study occupied by Aladdin, Abanazar, and the Emperor of China. The Slave of the Lamp, with the Princess Badroulboudour and the Widow Twankay, owned Number Five study across the same landing, so that the company could be easily assembled. The floor shook to the stamp-and-go of the ballet, while Aladdin, in pink cotton tights, a blue and tinsel jacket, and a plumed hat, banged alternately on the piano and his banjo. He was the moving spirit of the game, as befitted a senior who had passed his Army Preliminary and hoped to enter Sandhurst next spring.

Aladdin came to his own at last, Abanazar lay poisoned on the floor, the Widow Twankay

danced her dance, and the company decided it would "come all right on the night."

"What about the last song, though?" said the Emperor, a tallish, fair-headed boy with a ghost of a moustache, at which he pulled manfully. "We need a rousing old tune."

"'John Peel'? 'Drink, Puppy, Drink'?" suggested Abanazar, smoothing his baggy lilac pajamas. "Pussy" Abanazar never looked more than one-half awake, but he owned a soft, slow smile which well suited the part of the Wicked Uncle.

"Stale," said Aladdin. "Might as well have 'Grandfather's Clock.' What's that thing you were humming at prep. last night, Stalky?"

Stalky, The Slave of the Lamp, in black tights and doublet, a black silk half-mask on his forehead, whistled lazily where he lay on the top of the piano. It was a catchy music-hall tune.

Dick Four cocked his head critically, and squinted down a large red nose.

"Once more, and I can pick it up," he said, strumming. "Sing the words."

"Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby! Arrah, Patsy, mind the child!
Wrap him in an overcoat, he's surely going wild!
Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby! just you mind the child awhile!
He'll kick and bite and cry all night! Arrah, Patsy, mind the child!"

"Rippin'! Oh, rippin'!" said Dick Four. "Only we sha'n't have any piano on the night. We must work it with the banjoes — play an' dance at the same time. You try, Tertius."

The Emperor pushed aside his pea-green sleeves of state, and followed Dick Four on a heavy nickel-plated banjo.

"Yes, but I'm dead all this time. Bung in the middle of the stage, too," said Abanazar.

"Oh, that's Beetle's biznai," said Dick Four. "Vamp it up, Beetle. Don't keep us waiting all night. You've got to get Pussy out of the light somehow, and bring us all in dancin' at the end."

"All right. You two play it again," said Beetle, who, in a grey skirt and a wig of chestnut sausage-curls, set slantwise above a pair of spectacles mended with an old boot-lace, represented the Widow Twankay. He waved one leg in time to the hammered refrain, and the banjoes grew louder.

"Um! Ah! Er — 'Aladdin now has won his wife,'" he sang, and Dick Four repeated it.

"'Your Emperor is appeased.'" Tertius flung out his chest as he delivered his line.

"Now jump up, Pussy! Say, 'I think I'd better come to life!' Then we all take hands and come forward: 'We hope you've all been pleased.' *Twiggez-vous?*"

"*Nous twiggons.* Good enough. What's the

chorus for the final ballet? It's four kicks and a turn," said Dick Four.

"Oh! Er!

"John Short will ring the curtain down,
And ring the prompter's bell;
We hope you know before you go
That we all wish you well."

"Rippin'! Rippin'! Now for the Widow's scene with the Princess. Hurry up, Turkey."

McTurk, in a violet silk skirt and a coquettish blue turban, slouched forward as one thoroughly ashamed of himself. The Slave of the Lamp climbed down from the piano, and dispassionately kicked him. "Play up, Turkey," he said; "this is serious." But there fell on the door the knock of authority. It happened to be King, in gown and mortar-board, enjoying a Saturday evening prowl before dinner.

"Locked doors! Locked doors!" he snapped with a scowl. "What's the meaning of this; and what, may I ask, is the intention of this — this epicene attire?"

"Pantomime, sir. The Head gave us leave," said Abanazar, as the only member of the Sixth concerned. Dick Four stood firm in the confidence born of well-fitting tights, but Beetle strove to efface himself behind the piano. A grey princess-skirt borrowed from a day-boy's mother and a

spotted cotton bodice unsystematically padded with imposition-paper make one ridiculous. And in other regards Beetle had a bad conscience.

"As usual!" sneered King. "Futile foolery just when your careers, such as they may be, are hanging in the balance. I see! Ah, I see! The old gang of criminals — allied forces of disorder — Corkran" — The Slave of the Lamp smiled politely — "McTurk" — the Irishman scowled — "and, of course, the unspeakable Beetle, our friend Gigadibs." Abanazar, the Emperor, and Aladdin had more or less of characters, and King passed them over. "Come forth, my inky buffoon, from behind yonder instrument of music! You supply, I presume, the doggerel for this entertainment. Esteem yourself to be, as it were, a poet?"

"He's found one of 'em," thought Beetle, noting the flush on King's cheek-bone.

"I have just had the pleasure of reading an effusion of yours to my address, I believe — an effusion intended to rhyme. So — so you despise me, Master Gigadibs, do you? I am quite aware — you need not explain — that it was ostensibly *not* intended for my edification. I read it with laughter — yes, with laughter. These paper pellets of inky boys — still a boy we are, Master Gigadibs — do not disturb my equanimity."

"Wonder which it was," thought Beetle. He had launched many lampoons on an appreciative

public ever since he discovered that it was possible to convey reproof in rhyme.

In sign of his unruffled calm, King proceeded to tear Beetle, whom he called Gigadibs, slowly asunder. From his untied shoe-strings to his mended spectacles (the life of a poet at a big school is hard) he held him up to the derision of his associates — with the usual result. His wild flowers of speech — King had an unpleasant tongue — restored him to good humour at the last. He drew a lurid picture of Beetle's latter end as a scurrilous pamphleteer dying in an attic, scattered a few compliments over McTurk and Corkran, and, reminding Beetle that he must come up for judgment when called upon, went to Common-room, where he triumphed anew over his victims.

"And the worst of it," he explained in a loud voice over his soup, "is that I waste such gems of sarcasm on their thick heads. It's miles above them, I'm certain."

"We-ell," said the school chaplain, slowly, "I don't know what Corkran's appreciation of your style may be, but young McTurk reads Ruskin for his amusement."

"Nonsense! He does it to show off. I mistrust the dark Celt."

"He does nothing of the kind. I went into their study the other night, unofficially, and McTurk

was gluing up the back of four odd numbers of 'Fors Clavigera.'"

"I don't know anything about their private lives," said a mathematical master, hotly, "but I've learned by bitter experience that Number Five study are best left alone. They are utterly soulless young devils." He blushed as the others laughed.

But in the music-room there were wrath and bad language. Only Stalky, Slave of the Lamp, lay on the piano unmoved.

"That little swine Manders minor must have shown him your stuff. He's always suckin' up to King. Go and kill him," he drawled. "Which one was it, Beetle?"

"Dunno," said Beetle, struggling out of the skirt. "There was one about his hunting for popularity with the small boys, and the other one was one about him in hell, tellin' the Devil he was a Balliol man. I swear both of 'em rhymed all right. By gum! P'r'aps Manders minor showed him both! *I'll* correct his cæsuras for him."

He disappeared down two flights of stairs, flushed a small pink-and-white boy in a form-room next door to King's study, which, again, was immediately below his own, and chased him up the corridor into a form-room sacred to the revels of the Lower Third. Thence he came back, greatly disordered, to find McTurk, Stalky, and the others of

the company, in his study enjoying an unlimited "brew"— coffee, cocoa, buns, new bread hot and steaming, sardine, sausage, ham-and-tongue paste, pilchards, three jams, and at least as many pounds of Devonshire cream.

"My Hat!" said he, throwing himself upon the banquet. "Who stumped up for this, Stalky?" It was within a month of term-end, and blank starvation had reigned in the studies for weeks.

"You," said Stalky, serenely.

"Confound you! You haven't been popping my Sunday bags, then?"

"Keep your hair on. It's only your watch."

"Watch! I lost it — weeks ago. Out on the Burrows, when we tried to shoot the old ram — the day our pistol burst."

"It dropped out of your pocket (you're so beastly careless, Beetle), and McTurk and I kept it for you. I've been wearing it for a week, and you never noticed. Took it into Bideford after dinner to-day. Got thirteen and sevenpence. Here's the ticket."

"Well, that's pretty average cool," said Abanazar behind a slab of cream and jam, as Beetle, reassured upon the safety of his Sunday trousers, showed not even surprise, much less resentment. Indeed, it was McTurk who grew angry, saying:

"You gave him the ticket, Stalky? You *pawned* it? You unmitigated beast! Why, last

month you and Beetle sold mine! 'Never got a sniff of any ticket."

"Ah, that was because you locked your trunk, and we wasted half the afternoon hammering it open. We might have pawned it if you'd behaved like a Christian, Turkey."

"My Aunt!" said Abanazar, "you chaps *are* communists. Vote of thanks to Beetle, though."

"That's beastly unfair," said Stalky, "when I took all the trouble to pawn it. Beetle never knew he had a watch. Oh, I say, Rabbits-Eggs gave me a lift into Bideford this afternoon."

Rabbits-Eggs was the local carrier — an outcrop of the early Devonian formation. It was Stalky who had invented his unlovely name. "He was pretty average drunk, or he wouldn't have done it. Rabbits-Eggs is a little shy of me, somehow. But I swore it was *pax* between us, and gave him a bob. He stopped at two pubs on the way in, so he'll be howling drunk to-night. Oh, don't begin reading, Beetle; there's a council of war on. What the deuce is the matter with your collar?"

"'Chivied Manders minor into the Lower Third box-room. 'Had all his beastly little friends on top of me," said Beetle from behind a jar of pilchards and a book.

"You ass! Any fool could have told you where Manders would bunk to," said McTurk.

"I didn't think," said Beetle, meekly, scooping out pilchards with a spoon.

"'Course you didn't. You never do." McTurk adjusted Beetle's collar with a savage tug. "Don't drop oil all over my 'Fors,' or I'll scrag you!"

"Shut up, you — you Irish Biddy! 'Tisn't your beastly 'Fors.' It's one of mine."

The book was a fat, brown-backed volume of the later Sixties, which King had once thrown at Beetle's head that Beetle might see whence the name Gigadibs came. Beetle had quietly annexed the book, and had seen — several things. The quarter-comprehended verses lived and ate with him, as the bedropped pages showed. He removed himself from all that world, drifting at large with wondrous Men and Women, till McTurk hammered the pilchard spoon on his head and he snarled.

"Beetle! You're oppressed and insulted and bullied by King. Don't you feel it?"

"Let me alone! I can write some more poetry about him if I am, I suppose."

"Mad! Quite mad!" said Stalky to the visitors, as one exhibiting strange beasts. "Beetle reads an ass called Brownin', and McTurk reads an ass called Ruskin; and —"

"Ruskin isn't an ass," said McTurk. "He's almost as good as the Opium Eater. He says

'we're children of noble races trained by surrounding art.' That means *me*, and the way I decorated the study when you two badgers would have stuck up brackets and Christmas cards. Child of a noble race, trained by surrounding art, stop reading, or I'll shove a pilchard down your neck!"

"It's two to one," said Stalky, warningly, and Beetle closed the book, in obedience to the law under which he and his companions had lived for six checkered years.

The visitors looked on delighted. Number Five study had a reputation for more variegated insanity than the rest of the school put together; and so far as its code allowed friendship with outsiders it was polite and open-hearted to its neighbours on the same landing.

"What rot do you want now?" said Beetle.

"King! War!" said McTurk, jerking his head towards the wall, where hung a small wooden West-African war-drum, a gift to McTurk from a naval uncle.

"Then we shall be turned out of the study again," said Beetle, who loved his flesh-pots. "Mason turned us out for—just warbling on it." Mason was the mathematical master who had testified in Common-room.

"Warbling?—O Lord!" said Abanazar. "We couldn't hear ourselves speak in our study when

you played the infernal thing. What's the good of getting turned out of your study, anyhow?"

"We lived in the form-rooms for a week, too," said Beetle, tragically. "And it was beastly cold."

"Ye-es, but Mason's rooms were filled with rats every day we were out. It took him a week to draw the inference," said McTurk. "He loathes rats. 'Minute he let us go back the rats stopped. Mason's a little shy of us now, but there was no evidence."

"Jolly well there wasn't," said Stalky, "when I got out on the roof and dropped the beastly things down his chimney. But, look here — question is, are our characters good enough just now to stand a study row?"

"Never mind mine," said Beetle. "King swears I haven't any."

"I'm not thinking of you," Stalky returned scornfully. "You aren't going up for the Army, you old bat. I don't want to be expelled — and the Head's getting rather shy of us, too."

"Rot!" said McTurk. "The Head never expels except for beastliness or stealing. But I forgot; you and Beetle *are* thieves — regular burglars."

The visitors gasped, but Stalky interpreted the parable with large grins.

"Well, you know, that little beast Manders

minor saw Beetle and me hammerin' McTurk's trunk open in the dormitory when we took his watch last month. Of course Manders sneaked to Mason, and Mason solemnly took it up as a case of theft, to get even with us about the rats."

"That just put Mason into our giddy hands," said McTurk, blandly. "We were nice to him, 'cause he was a new master and wanted to win the confidence of the boys. 'Pity he draws inferences, though. Stalky went to his study and pretended to blub, and told Mason he'd lead a new life if Mason would let him off this time, but Mason wouldn't. 'Said it was his duty to report him to the Head."

"Vindictive swine!" said Beetle. "It was all those rats! Then *I* blubbed, too, and Stalky confessed that he'd been a thief in regular practice for six years, ever since he came to the school; and that I'd taught him—*à la* Fagin. Mason turned white with joy. He thought he had us on toast."

"Gorgeous! Gorgeous!" said Dick Four. "We never heard of this."

"'Course not. Mason kept it jolly quiet. He wrote down all our statements on impot-paper. There wasn't anything he wouldn't believe," said Stalky.

"And handed it all up to the Head, *with* an extempore prayer. It took about forty pages," said Beetle. "I helped him a lot."

"And then, you crazy idiots?" said Abanazar.

"Oh, we were sent for; and Stalky asked to have the 'depositions' read out, and the Head knocked him spinning into a waste-paper basket. Then he gave us eight cuts apiece — welters — for — for — takin' unheard-of liberties with a new master. I saw his shoulders shaking when we went out. Do you know," said Beetle, pensively, "that Mason can't look at us now in second lesson without blushing? We three stare at him sometimes till he regularly trickles. He's an awfully sensitive beast."

"He read 'Eric, or Little by Little,'" said McTurk; "so we gave him 'St. Winifred's, *or* the World of School.' They spent all their spare time stealing at St. Winifred's, when they weren't praying or getting drunk at pubs. Well, that was only a week ago, and the Head's a little bit shy of us. He called it constructive deviltry. Stalky invented it all."

"Not the least good having a row with a master unless you can make an ass of him," said Stalky, extended at ease on the hearth-rug. "If Mason didn't know Number Five — well, he's learned, that's all. Now, my dearly beloved 'earers" — Stalky curled his legs under him and addressed the company — "we've got that strong, perseverin' man King on our hands. He went miles out of his way to provoke a conflict." (Here Stalky

snapped down the black silk domino and assumed the air of a judge.) "He has oppressed Beetle, McTurk, and me, *privatim et seriatim*, one by one, as he could catch us. But *now* he has insulted Number Five up in the music-room, and in the presence of these — these ossifers of the Ninety-third, wot look like hair-dressers. Binjimin, we must make him cry 'Capivi!'"

Stalky's reading did *not* include Browning or Ruskin.

"And, besides," said McTurk, "he's a Philistine, a basket-hanger. He wears a tartan tie. Ruskin says that any man who wears a tartan tie will, without doubt, be damned everlastingly."

"Bravo, McTurk," said Tertius; "I thought he was only a beast."

"He's that, too, of course, but he's worse. He has a china basket with blue ribbons and a pink kitten on it, hung up in his window to grow musk in. You know when I got all that old oak carvin' out of Bideford Church, when they were restoring it (Ruskin says that any man who'll restore a church is an unmitigated sweep), and stuck it up here with glue? Well, King came in and wanted to know whether we'd done it with a fret-saw! Yah! He is the King of basket-hangers!"

Down went McTurk's inky thumb over an imaginary arena full of bleeding Kings. "*Placetne*, child of a generous race!" he cried to Beetle.

"Well," began Beetle, doubtfully, "he comes from Balliol, but I'm going to give the beast a chance. You see I can always make him hop with some more poetry. He can't report me to the Head, because it makes him ridiculous. (Stalky's quite right.) But he shall have his chance."

Beetle opened the book on the table, ran his finger down a page, and began at random:

> "Or who in Moscow towards the Czar
> With the demurest of footfalls,
> Over the Kremlin's pavement white
> With serpentine and syenite,
> Steps with five other generals—"

"That's no good. Try another," said Stalky.

"Hold on a shake; I know what's coming." McTurk was reading over Beetle's shoulder.

> "That simultaneously take snuff,
> For each to have pretext enough
> And kerchiefwise unfold his sash,
> Which—softness' self—is yet the stuff

(Gummy! What a sentence!)

> To hold fast where a steel chain snaps
> And leave the grand white neck no gash.

(Full stop.)"

"'Don't understand a word of it," said Stalky.

"More fool you! Construe," said McTurk.

"Those six bargees scragged the Czar, and left no evidence. *Actum est* with King."

"He gave me that book, too," said Beetle, licking his lips:

> "There's a great text in Galatians,
> Once you trip on it entails
> Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
> One sure if another fails."

Then irrelevantly:

> "Setebos! Setebos! and Setebos!
> Thinketh he liveth in the cold of the moon."

"He's just come in from dinner," said Dick Four, looking through the window. "Manders minor is with him."

"'Safest place for Manders minor just now," said Beetle.

"Then you chaps had better clear out," said Stalky politely to the visitors. "'Tisn't fair to mix you up in a study row. Besides, we can't afford to have evidence."

"Are you going to begin at once?" said Aladdin.

"Immediately, if not sooner," said Stalky, and turned out the gas. "Strong, perseverin' man — King. Make him cry 'Capivi!' G'way, Binjimin."

The company retreated to their own neat and spacious study with expectant souls.

"When Stalky blows out his nostrils like a horse," said Aladdin to the Emperor of China, "he's on the war-path. 'Wonder what King will get."

"Beans," said the Emperor. "Number Five generally pays in full."

"Wonder if I ought to take any notice of it officially," said Abanazar, who had just remembered he was a prefect.

"It's none of your business, Pussy. Besides, if you did, we'd have them hostile to *us;* and we shouldn't be able to do any work," said Aladdin. "They've begun already."

Now that West-African war-drum had been made to signal across estuaries and deltas. Number Five was forbidden to wake the engine within ear-shot of the school. But a deep, devastating drone filled the passages as McTurk and Beetle scientifically rubbed its top. Anon it changed to the blare of trumpets — of savage pursuing trumpets. Then, as McTurk slapped one side, smooth with the blood of ancient sacrifice, the roar broke into short coughing howls such as the wounded gorilla throws in his native forest. These were followed by the wrath of King — three steps at a time, up the staircase, with a dry whir of the gown. Aladdin and company, listening, squeaked with excitement as the door crashed open. King stumbled into the darkness, and cursed those performers by the gods of Balliol and quiet repose.

"Turned out for a week," said Aladdin, holding the study door on the crack. "Key to be brought down to his study in five minutes. 'Brutes! Barbarians! Savages! Children!' He's rather agitated. 'Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby,'" he sang in a whisper as he clung to the door-knob, dancing a noiseless war-dance.

King went down-stairs again, and Beetle and McTurk lit the gas to confer with Stalky. But Stalky had vanished.

"Looks like no end of a mess," said Beetle, collecting his books and mathematical instrument case. "A week in the form-rooms isn't any advantage to us."

"Yes, but don't you see that Stalky isn't here, you owl!" said McTurk. "Take down the key, and look sorrowful. King'll only jaw you for half an hour. I'm going to read in the lower form-room."

"But it's always me," mourned Beetle.

"Wait till we see," said McTurk, hopefully. "I don't know any more than you do what Stalky means, but it's something. Go down and draw King's fire. You're used to it."

No sooner had the key turned in the door than the lid of the coal-box, which was also the window-seat, lifted cautiously. It had been a tight fit, even for the lithe Stalky, his head between his knees, and his stomach under his right ear. From

a drawer in the table he took a well-worn catapult, a handful of buckshot, and a duplicate key of the study; noiselessly he raised the window and kneeled by it, his face turned to the road, the wind-sloped trees, the dark levels of the Burrows, and the white line of breakers falling nine-deep along the Pebbleridge. Far down the steep-banked Devonshire lane he heard the husky hoot of the carrier's horn. There was a ghost of melody in it, as it might have been the wind in a gin-bottle essaying to sing, "It's a way we have in the Army."

Stalky smiled a tight-lipped smile, and at extreme range opened fire: the old horse half wheeled in the shafts.

"Where he gwaine tu?" hiccoughed Rabbits-Eggs. Another buckshot tore through the rotten canvas tilt with a vicious zipp.

"*Habet!*" murmured Stalky, as Rabbits-Eggs swore into the patient night, protesting that he saw the "dommed colleger" who was assaulting him.

* * * * * * * * * *

"And so," King was saying in a high head voice to Beetle, whom he had kept to play with before Manders minor, well knowing that it hurts a Fifth-form boy to be held up to a fag's derision, "and so, Master Beetle, in spite of all our verses, which we are so proud of, when we presume to

come into direct conflict with even so humble a representative of authority as myself, for instance, we are turned out of our studies, are we not?"

"Yes, sir," said Beetle, with a sheepish grin on his lips and murder in his heart. Hope had nearly left him, but he clung to a well-established faith that never was Stalky so dangerous as when he was invisible.

"You are *not* required to criticise, thank you. Turned out of our studies, we are, just as if we were no better than little Manders minor. Only inky schoolboys we are, and must be treated as such."

Beetle pricked up his ears, for Rabbits-Eggs was swearing savagely on the road, and some of the language entered at the upper sash. King believed in ventilation. He strode to the window, gowned and majestic, very visible in the gaslight.

"I zee 'un! I zee 'un!" roared Rabbits-Eggs, now that he had found a visible foe — another shot from the darkness above. "Yiss, yeou, yeou long-nosed, fower-eyed, gingy-whiskered beggar! Yeou'm tu old for such goin's on. Aie! Poultice yeour nose, I tall 'ee! Poultice yeour long nose!"

Beetle's heart leaped up within him. Somewhere, somehow, he knew, Stalky moved behind these manifestations. There were hope and the prospect of revenge. He would embody the suggestion about the nose in deathless verse. King

threw up the window, and sternly rebuked Rabbits-Eggs. But the carrier was beyond fear or fawning. He had descended from the cart, and was stooping by the roadside.

It all fell swiftly as a dream. Manders minor raised his hand to his head with a cry, as a jagged flint cannoned on to some rich tree-calf bindings in the book-shelf. Another quoited along the writing-table. Beetle made zealous feint to stop it, and in that endeavour overturned a student's lamp, which dripped, *via* King's papers and some choice books, greasily on to a Persian rug. There was much broken glass on the window-seat; the china basket — McTurk's aversion — cracked to flinders, had dropped her musk plant and its earth over the red rep cushions; Manders minor was bleeding profusely from a cut on the cheek-bone; and King, using strange words, every one of which Beetle treasured, ran forth to find the school-sergeant, that Rabbits-Eggs might be instantly cast into jail.

"Poor chap!" said Beetle, with a false, feigned sympathy. "Let it bleed a little. That'll prevent apoplexy," and he held the blind head skilfully over the table, and the papers on the table, as he guided the howling Manders to the door.

Then did Beetle, alone with the wreckage, return good for evil. How, in that office, a complete set of "Gibbon" was scarred all along the

back as by a flint; how so much black and copying ink came to be mingled with Manders's gore on the table-cloth; why the big gum-bottle, unstoppered, had rolled semicircularly across the floor; and in what manner the white china door-knob grew to be painted with yet more of Manders's young blood, were matters which Beetle did not explain when the rabid King returned to find him standing politely over the reeking hearth-rug.

"You never told me to go, sir," he said, with the air of Casabianca, and King consigned him to the outer darkness.

But it was to a boot-cupboard under the staircase on the ground floor that he hastened, to loose the mirth that was destroying him. He had not drawn breath for a first whoop of triumph when two hands choked him dumb.

"Go to the dormitory and get me my things. Bring 'em to Number Five lavatory. I'm still in tights," hissed Stalky, sitting on his head. "Don't run. Walk."

But Beetle staggered into the form-room next door, and delegated his duty to the yet unenlightened McTurk, with an hysterical précis of the campaign thus far. So it was McTurk, of the wooden visage, who brought the clothes from the dormitory while Beetle panted on a form. Then the three buried themselves in Number Five lavatory,

turned on all the taps, filled the place with steam, and dropped weeping into the baths, where they pieced out the war.

"*Moi! Je! Ich! Ego!*" gasped Stalky. "I waited till I couldn't hear myself think, while you played the drum! Hid in the coal-locker — and tweaked Rabbits-Eggs — and Rabbits-Eggs rocked King. Wasn't it beautiful? Did you hear the glass?"

"Why, he — he — he," shrieked McTurk, one trembling finger pointed at Beetle.

"Why, I — I — I was through it all," Beetle howled; "in his study, being jawed."

"Oh, my soul!" said Stalky, with a yell, disappearing under water.

"The — the glass was nothing. Manders minor's head's cut open. La-la-lamp upset all over the rug. Blood on the books and papers. The gum! The gum! The gum! The ink! The ink! The ink! O Lord!"

Then Stalky leaped out, all pink as he was, and shook Beetle into some sort of coherence; but his tale prostrated them afresh.

"I bunked for the boot-cupboard the second I heard King go down-stairs. Beetle tumbled in on top of me. The spare key's hid behind the loose board. There isn't a shadow of evidence," said Stalky. They were all chanting together.

"And he turned us out himself--himself—

him*self!*" This from McTurk. "He can't begin to suspect us. Oh, Stalky, it's the loveliest thing we've ever done."

"Gum! Gum! Dollops of gum!" shoured Beetle, his spectacles gleaming through a sea of lather. "Ink and blood all mixed. I held the little beast's head all over the Latin proses for Monday. Golly, how the oil stunk! And Rabbits-Eggs told King to poultice his nose! Did you hit Rabbits-Eggs, Stalky?"

"Did I jolly well not? Tweaked him all over. Did you hear him curse? Oh, I shall be sick in a minute if I don't stop."

But dressing was a slow process, because McTurk was obliged to dance when he heard that the musk basket was broken, and, moreover, Beetle retailed all King's language with emendations and purple insets.

"Shockin'!" said Stalky, collapsing in a helpless welter of half-hitched trousers. "So dam' bad, too, for innocent boys like us! Wonder what they'd say at 'St. Winifred's, *or* the World of School.' By gum! That reminds me we owe the Lower Third one for assaultin' Beetle when he chivied Manders minor. Come on! It's an alibi, Samivel; and, besides, if we let 'em off they'll be worse next time."

The Lower Third had set a guard upon their form-room for the space of a full hour, which to a

boy is a lifetime. Now they were busy with their Saturday evening businesses — cooking sparrows over the gas with rusty nibs; brewing unholy drinks in gallipots; skinning moles with pocket-knives; attending to paper trays full of silkworms, or discussing the iniquities of their elders with a freedom, fluency, and point that would have amazed their parents. The blow fell without warning. Stalky upset a form crowded with small boys among their own cooking utensils, McTurk raided the untidy lockers as a terrier digs at a rabbit-hole, while Beetle poured ink upon such heads as he could not appeal to with a Smith's Classical Dictionary. Three brisk minutes accounted for many silkworms, pet larvæ, French exercises, school caps, half-prepared bones and skulls, and a dozen pots of home-made sloe jam. It was a great wreckage, and the form-room looked as though three conflicting tempests had smitten it.

"Phew!" said Stalky, drawing breath outside the door (amid groans of "Oh, you beastly ca-ads! You think yourselves awful funny," and so forth). "*That's* all right. Never let the sun go down upon your wrath. Rummy little devils, fags. Got no notion o' combinin'."

"Six of 'em sat on my head when I went in after Manders minor," said Beetle. "I warned 'em what they'd get, though."

"Everybody paid in full — beautiful feelin',"

said McTurk, absently, as they strolled along the corridor. "Don't think we'd better say much about King, though, do you, Stalky?"

"Not *much*. Our line is injured innocence, of course — same as when the Sergeant reported us on suspicion of smoking in the bunkers. If I hadn't thought of buyin' the pepper and spillin' it all over our clothes, he'd have smelt us. King was gha-astly facetious about that. 'Called us bird-stuffers in form for a week."

"Ah, King hates the Natural History Society because little Hartopp is president. Mustn't do anything in the Coll without glorifyin' King," said McTurk. "But he must be a putrid ass, you know, to suppose at our time o' life we'd go out and stuff birds like fags."

"Poor old King!" said Beetle. "He's awfly unpopular in Common-room, and they'll chaff his head off about Rabbits-Eggs. Golly! How lovely! How beautiful! How holy! But you should have seen his face when the first rock came in! *And* the earth from the basket!"

So they were all stricken helpless for five minutes.

They repaired at last to Abanazar's study, and were received reverently.

"What's the matter?" said Stalky, quick to realise new atmospheres.

"You know jolly well," said Abanazar. "You'll

be expelled if you get caught. King is a gibbering maniac."

"Who? Which? What? Expelled for how? We only played the war-drum. We've got turned out for that already."

"Do you chaps mean to say you didn't make Rabbits-Eggs drunk and bribe him to rock King's rooms?"

"Bribe him? No, that I'll swear we didn't," said Stalky, with a relieved heart, for he loved not to tell lies. "What a low mind you've got, Pussy! We've been down having a bath. Did Rabbits-Eggs rock King? Strong, perseverin' man King? Shockin'!"

"Awf'ly. King's frothing at the mouth. There's bell for prayers. Come on."

"Wait a sec," said Stalky, continuing the conversation in a loud and cheerful voice, as they descended the stairs. "What did Rabbits-Eggs rock King for?"

"I know," said Beetle, as they passed King's open door. "I was in his study."

"Hush, you ass!" hissed the Emperor of China.

"Oh, he's gone down to prayers," said Beetle, watching the shadow of the house-master on the wall. "Rabbits-Eggs was only a bit drunk, swearin' at his horse, and King jawed him through the window, and then, of course, he rocked King."

"Do you mean to say," said Stalky, "that King began it?"

King was behind them, and every well-weighed word went up the staircase like an arrow.

"I can only swear," said Beetle, "that King cursed like a bargee. Simply disgustin'. I'm goin' to write to my father about it."

"Better report it to Mason," suggested Stalky. "He knows our tender consciences. Hold on a shake. I've got to tie my boot-lace."

The other study hurried forward. They did not wish to be dragged into stage asides of this nature. So it was left to McTurk to sum up the situation beneath the guns of the enemy.

"You see," said the Irishman, hanging on the banister, "he begins by bullying little chaps; then he bullies the big chaps; then he bullies some one who isn't connected with the College, and then he catches it. Serves him jolly well right. . . . I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't see you were coming down the staircase."

The black gown tore past like a thunder-storm, and in its wake, three abreast, arms linked, the Aladdin company rolled up the big corridor to prayers, singing with most innocent intention:

"Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby! Arrah, Patsy, mind the child!
Wrap him in an overcoat, he's surely going wild!
Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby! just you mind the child awhile!
He'll kick and bite and cry all night! Arrah, Patsy, mind
the child!"

AN UNSAVOURY INTERLUDE

AN UNSAVOURY INTERLUDE

IT was a maiden aunt of Stalky who sent him both books, with the inscription, "To dearest Artie, on his sixteenth birthday"; it was McTurk who ordered their hypothecation; and it was Beetle, returned from Bideford, who flung them on the window-sill of Number Five study with news that Bastable would advance but ninepence on the two; "Eric, or Little by Little," being almost as great a drug as "St. Winifred's." "An' I don't think much of your aunt. We're nearly out of cartridges, too — Artie, dear."

Whereupon Stalky rose up to grapple with him, but McTurk sat on Stalky's head, calling him a "pure-minded boy" till peace was declared. As they were grievously in arrears with a Latin prose, as it was a blazing July afternoon, and as they ought to have been at a house cricket-match, they began to renew their acquaintance, intimate and unholy, with the volumes.

"Here we are!" said McTurk. "'Corporal punishment produced on Eric the worst effects. He burned *not* with remorse or regret'— make a

note o' that, Beetle — 'but with shame and violent indignation. He glared'— oh, naughty Eric! Let's get to where he goes in for drink."

"Hold on half a shake. Here's another sample. 'The Sixth,' he says,' is the palladium of all public schools.' But this lot" — Stalky rapped the gilded book — "can't prevent fellows drinkin' and stealin', an' lettin' fags out of window at night, an' — an' doin' what they please. Golly, what we've missed — not goin' to St. Winifred's! . . ."

"I'm sorry to see any boys of my house taking so little interest in their matches."

Mr. Prout could move very silently if he pleased, though that is no merit in a boy's eyes. He had flung open the study door without knocking — another sin — and looked at them suspiciously. "Very sorry, indeed, I am to see you frowsting in your studies."

"We've been out ever since dinner, sir," said McTurk, wearily. One house-match is just like another, and their "ploy" of that week happened to be rabbit-shooting with saloon-pistols.

"I can't see a ball when it's coming, sir," said Beetle. "I've had my gig-lamps smashed at the Nets till I got excused. I wasn't any good even as a fag, then, sir."

"Tuck is probably your form. Tuck and brewing. Why can't you three take any interest in the honour of your house?"

Worst of all, they began at times to wonder whether Stalky & Co. had not some truth in their often-repeated assertions that Prout was a gloomy ass.

"As you know, I am not the kind of man who puts himself out for every little thing he hears. *I* believe in letting the house work out their own salvation -- with a light guiding hand on the reins, of course. But there is a perceptible lack of reverence — a lower tone in matters that touch the honour of the house, a sort of hardness."

"Oh, Prout he is a nobleman, a nobleman, a nobleman!
Our Heffy is a nobleman —
He does an awful lot,
Because his popularity —
Oh, pop-u-pop-u-larity —
His giddy popularity
Would suffer did he not!"

The study door stood ajar; and the song, borne by twenty clear voices, came faint from a form-room. The fags rather liked the tune; the words were Beetle's.

"That's a thing no sensible man objects to," said Prout, with a lopsided smile; "but you know straws show which way the wind blows. Can you trace it to any direct influence? I am speaking to you now as heads of the house."

"There isn't the least doubt of it," said Harrison, angrily. "I know what you mean, sir. It all

began when Number Five study came to the form-rooms. There's no use blinkin' it, Craye. You know that, too."

"They make things rather difficult for us, sometimes," said Craye. "It's more their manner than anything else, that Harrison means."

"Do they hamper you in the discharge of your duties, then?"

"Well, no, sir. They only look on and grin — and turn up their noses generally."

"Ah," said Prout, sympathetically.

"I think, sir," said Craye, plunging into the business boldly, "it would be a great deal better if they were sent back to their study — better for the house. They are rather old to be knocking about the form-rooms."

"They are younger than Orrin, or Flint, and a dozen others that I can think of."

"Yes, sir; but that's different, somehow. They're rather influential. They have a knack of upsettin' things in a quiet way that one can't take hold of. At least, if one does —"

"And you think they would be better in their own study again?"

Emphatically Harrison and Craye were of that opinion. As Harrison said to Craye, afterwards, "They've weakened our authority. They're too big to lick; they've made an exhibition of us over this usury business, and we're a laughing-stock to

the rest of the school. I'm going up [for Sandhurst, understood] next term. They've managed to knock me out of half my work already with their — their lunacy. If they go back to their study we may have a little peace."

"Hullo, Harrison!" McTurk ambled round the corner, with a roving eye on all possible horizons. "Bearin' up, old man? That's right. Live it down! Live it down!"

"What d'you mean?"

"You look a little pensive," said McTurk. "Exhaustin' job superintendin' the honour of the house, ain't it? By the way, how are you off for mares'-nests?"

"Look here," said Harrison, hoping for instant reward. "We've recommended Prout to let you go back to your study."

"The dooce you have! And who under the sun are *you* to interfere between us and our housemaster? Upon my Sam, you two try us very hard — you do, indeed. Of course we don't know how far you abuse your position to prejudice us with Mr. Prout; but when you deliberately stop me to tell me you've been makin' arrangements behind our back — in secret — with Prout — I — I don't know really what we ought to do."

"That's beastly unfair!" cried Craye.

"It is." McTurk had adopted a ghastly solemnity that sat well on his long, lean face.

"Hang it all! A prefect's one thing and an usher's another; but you seem to combine 'em. You recommend this — you recommend that! *You* say how and when we go back to our study!"

"But— but — we thought you'd like it, Turkey. We did, indeed. You know you'll be ever so much more comfortable there." Harrison's voice was almost tearful.

McTurk turned away as though to hide his emotions.

"They're broke!" He hunted up Stalky and Beetle in a box-room. "They're sick! They've been beggin' Heffy to let us go back to Number Five. Poor devils! Poor little devils!"

"It's the olive branch," was Stalky's comment. "It's the giddy white flag, by gum! Come to think of it, we *have* metagrobolised 'em."

Just after tea that day, Mr. Prout sent for them to say that if they chose to ruin their future by neglecting their work, it was entirely their own affair. He wished them, however, to understand that their presence in the form-rooms could not be tolerated one hour longer. He personally did not care to think of the time he must spend in eliminating the traces of their evil influences. How far Beetle had pandered to the baser side of youthful imagination he would ascertain later; and Beetle might be sure that if Mr. Prout came across any soul-corrupting consequences —

fags may be lendin' and borrowin' far beyond their means. *We* aren't responsible for it. We're only the rank and file."

"Are you surprised we don't wish to associate with the house?" said McTurk, with dignity. "We've kept ourselves to ourselves in our study till we were turned out, and now we find ourselves let in for — for this sort of thing. It's simply disgraceful."

"Then you hector and bullyrag us on the stairs," said Stalky, "about matters that are your business entirely. You know we aren't prefects."

"You threatened us with a prefect's lickin' just now," said Beetle, boldly inventing as he saw the bewilderment in the faces of the enemy.

"And if you expect you'll gain anything from us by your way of approachin' us, you're jolly well mistaken. That's all. Good night."

They clattered up-stairs, injured virtue on every inch of their backs.

"But — but what the dickens have *we* done?" said Harrison, amazedly, to Craye.

"I don't know. Only — it always happens that way when one has anything to do with them. They're so beastly plausible."

And Mr. Prout called the good boys into his study anew, and succeeded in sinking both his and their innocent minds ten fathoms deeper in blindfolded bedazement. He spoke of steps and

measures, of tone and loyalty in the house and to the house, and urged them to take up the matter tactfully.

So they demanded of Beetle whether he had any connection with any other establishment. Beetle promptly went to his house-master, and wished to know by what right Harrison and Craye had reopened a matter already settled between him and his house-master. In injured innocence no boy excelled Beetle.

Then it occurred to Prout that he might have been unfair to the culprit, who had not striven to deny or palliate his offence. He sent for Harrison and Craye, reprehending them very gently for the tone they had adopted to a repentant sinner, and when they returned to their study, they used the language of despair. They then made headlong inquisition through the house, driving the fags to the edge of hysterics, and unearthing, with tremendous pomp and parade, the natural and inevitable system of small loans that prevails among small boys.

"You see, Harrison, Thornton minor lent me a penny last Saturday, because I was fined for breaking the window; and I spent it at Keyte's. I didn't know there was any harm in it. And Wray major borrowed twopence from me when my uncle sent me a post-office order — I cashed it at Keyte's — for five bob; but he'll pay me back

before the holidays. We didn't know there was anything wrong in it."

They waded through hours of this kind of thing, but found no usury, or anything approaching to Beetle's gorgeous scale of interest. The seniors — for the school had no tradition of deference to prefects outside compulsory games — told them succinctly to go about their business. They would not give evidence on any terms. Harrison was one idiot, and Craye was another; but the greatest of all, they said, was their house-master.

When a house is thoroughly upset, however good its conscience, it breaks into knots and coteries — small gatherings in the twilight, box-room committees, and groups in the corridor. And when from group to group, with an immense affectation of secrecy, three wicked boys steal, crying "*Cavé!*" when there is no need of caution, and whispering "Don't tell!" on the heels of trumpery confidences that instant invented, a very fine air of plot and intrigue can be woven round such a house.

At the end of a few days, it dawned on Prout that he moved in an atmosphere of perpetual ambush. Mysteries hedged him on all sides, warnings ran before his heavy feet, and countersigns were muttered behind his attentive back. McTurk and Stalky invented many absurd and idle phrases — catch-words that swept through the

house as fire through stubble. It was a rare jest, and the only practical outcome of the Usury Commission, that one boy should say to a friend, with awful gravity, "Do you think there's much of it going on in the house?" The other would reply, "Well, one can't be too careful, you know." The effect on a house-master of humane conscience and good intent may be imagined. Again, a man who has sincerely devoted himself to gaining the esteem of his charges does not like to hear himself described, even at a distance, as "Popularity Prout" by a dark and scowling Celt with a fluent tongue. A rumour that stories — unusual stories — are told in the form-rooms, between the lights, by a boy who does not command his confidence, agitates such a man; and even elaborate and tender politeness — for the courtesy wise-grown men offer to a bewildered child was the courtesy that Stalky wrapped round Prout — restores not his peace of mind.

"The tone of the house seems changed — changed for the worse," said Prout to Harrison and Craye. "Have you noticed it? I don't for an instant impute —"

He never imputed anything; but, on the other hand, he never did anything else, and, with the best intentions in the world, he had reduced the house-prefects to a state as nearly bordering on nervous irritation as healthy boys can know.

In the hopelessly involved finances of the study there was just that sum to which both McTurk and Beetle laid claim, as their share in the pledging of Stalky's second-best Sunday trousers. But Stalky had maintained for two terms that the money was his "commission" for effecting the pawn; and had, of course, spent it on a study "brew."

"Understand this, then. You are not to continue your operations as a money-lender. Two and fourpence, you said, Corkran?"

Stalky had said nothing, and continued so to do.

"Your influence for evil is quite strong enough without buying a hold over your companions." He felt in his pockets, and (oh joy!) produced a florin and fourpence. "Bring me what you call Corkran's note-of-hand, and be thankful that I do not carry the matter any further. The money is stopped from your pocket-money, Corkran. The receipt to my study, at once."

Little they cared! Two and fourpence in a lump is worth six weekly sixpences any hungry day of the week.

"But what the dooce *is* a note-of-hand?" said Beetle. "I only read about it in a book."

"Now you've jolly well got to make one," said Stalky.

"Yes — but our ink don't turn black till next day. S'pose he'll spot that?"

"Not him. He's too worried," said McTurk. "Sign your name on a bit of impot-paper, Stalky, and write, 'I O U two and fourpence.' Aren't you grateful to me for getting that out of Prout? Stalky'd never have paid. . . . Why, you ass!"

Mechanically Beetle had handed over the money to Stalky as treasurer of the study. The custom of years is not lightly broken.

In return for the document, Prout expounded to Beetle the enormity of money-lending, which, like everything except compulsory cricket, corrupted houses and destroyed good feeling among boys, made youth cold and calculating, and opened the door to all evil. Finally, did Beetle know of any other cases? If so, it was his duty as proof of repentance to let his house-master know. No names need be mentioned.

Beetle did not know — at least, he was not quite sure, sir. How could he give evidence against his friends? The house might, of course — here he feigned an anguished delicacy — be full of it. He was not in a position to say. He had not met with any open competition in his trade; but if Mr. Prout considered it was a matter that affected the honour of the house (Mr. Prout did consider it precisely that), perhaps the house-prefects would be better . . .

He spun it out till half-way through prep.

"And," said the amateur Shylock, returning to

the form-room and dropping at Stalky's side, "if he don't think the house is putrid with it, I'm several Dutchmen—that's all. . . . I've been to Mr. Prout's study, sir." This to the prep.-master. "He said I could sit where I liked, sir. . . . Oh, he is just tricklin' with emotion. . . . Yes, sir, I'm only askin' Corkran to let me have a dip in his ink."

After prayers, on the road to the dormitories, Harrison and Craye, senior house-prefects, zealous in their office, waylaid them with great anger.

"What have you been doing to Heffy this time, Beetle? He's been jawin' us all the evening."

"What has His Serene Transparency been vexin' you for?" said McTurk.

"About Beetle lendin' money to Stalky," began Harrison; "and then Beetle went and told him that there was any amount of money-lendin' in the house."

"No, you don't," said Beetle, sitting on a boot-basket. "That's just what I didn't tell him. I spoke the giddy truth. He asked me if there was much of it in the house; and I said I didn't know."

"He thinks you're a set of filthy Shylocks," said McTurk. "It's just as well for you he don't think you're burglars. You know he never gets a notion out of his conscientious old head."

"Well-meanin' man. Did it all for the best." Stalky curled gracefully round the stair-rail.

"Head in a drain-pipe. Full confession in the left boot. Bad for the honour of the house — very."

"Shut up," said Harrison. "You chaps always behave as if you were jawin' us when we come to jaw you."

"You're a lot too cheeky," said Craye.

"I don't quite see where the cheek comes in, except on your part, in interferin' with a private matter between me an' Beetle after it has been settled by Prout." Stalky winked cheerfully at the others.

"That's the worst of clever little swots," said McTurk, addressing the gas. "They get made prefects before they have any tact, and then they annoy chaps who could really help 'em to look after the honour of the house."

"We won't trouble you to do that!" said Craye, hotly.

"Then what are you badgerin' us for?" said Beetle. "On your own showing, you've been so beastly slack, looking after the house, that Prout believes it's a nest of money-lenders. I've told him that I've lent money to Stalky, and no one else. I don't know whether he believes me, but that finishes my case. The rest is *your* business."

"Now we find out," Stalky's voice rose, "that there is apparently an organised conspiracy throughout the house. For aught we know, the

to be Belial," said Stalky, with an ensnaring grin.

"Right O," said Beetle, "and I'll be Mammon. I'll lend money at usury — that's what they do at all schools accordin' to the B. O. P. Penny a week on a shillin'. That'll startle Heffy's weak intellect. You can be Lucifer, Turkey."

"What have I got to do?" McTurk also smiled.

"Head conspiracies — and cabals — and boycotts. Go in for that 'stealthy intrigue' that Heffy is always talkin' about. Come on!"

The house received them on their fall with the mixture of jest and sympathy always extended to boys turned out of their study. The known aloofness of the three made them more interesting.

"Quite like old times, ain't it?" Stalky selected a locker and flung in his books. "We've come to sport with you, my young friends, for a while, because our beloved house-master has hove us out of our diggin's."

"'Serve you jolly well right," said Orrin, "you cribbers!"

"This will never do," said Stalky. "We can't maintain our giddy prestige, Orrin, de-ah, if you make these remarks."

They wrapped themselves lovingly about the boy, thrust him to the opened window, and drew down the sash to the nape of his neck. With an

equal swiftness they tied his thumbs together behind his back with a piece of twine, and then, because he kicked furiously, removed his shoes.

There Mr. Prout happened to find him a few minutes later, guillotined and helpless, surrounded by a convulsed crowd who would not assist.

Stalky, in an upper form-room, had gathered himself allies against vengeance. Orrin presently tore up at the head of a boarding party, and the form-room grew one fog of dust through which boys wrestled, stamped, shouted, and yelled. A desk was carried away in the tumult, a knot of warriors reeled into and split a door-panel, a window was broken, and a gas-jet fell. Under cover of the confusion the three escaped to the corridor, whence they called in and sent up passers-by to the fray.

"Rescue, Kings! Kings! Kings! Number Twelve form-room! Rescue, Prouts — Prouts! Rescue, Macreas! Rescue, Hartopps!"

The juniors hurried out like bees aswarm, asking no questions, clattered up the staircase, and added themselves to the embroilment.

"Not bad for the first evening's work," said Stalky, rearranging his collar. "I fancy Prout'll be somewhat annoyed. We'd better establish an *alibi*." So they sat on Mr. King's railings till prep.

"You see," quoth Stalky, as they strolled up to prep. with the ignoble herd, "if you get the houses well mixed up an' scufflin', it's even bettin' that

some ass will start a real row. Hullo, Orrin, you look rather metagrobolised."

"It was all your fault, you beast! You started it. We've got two hundred lines apiece, and Heffy's lookin' for you. Just see what that swine Malpas did to my eye!"

"I like your saying *we* started it. Who called us cribbers? Can't your infant mind connect cause and effect yet? Some day you'll find out that it don't pay to jest with Number Five."

"Where's that shillin' you owe me?" said Beetle, suddenly.

Stalky could not see Prout behind him, but returned the lead without a quaver.

"I only owed you ninepence, you old usurer."

"You've forgotten the interest," said McTurk. "A halfpenny a week per bob is Beetle's charge. You must be beastly rich, Beetle."

"Well, Beetle lent me sixpence." Stalky came to a full stop and made as to work it out on his fingers. "Sixpence on the nineteenth, didn't he?"

"Yes; but you've forgotten you paid no interest on the other bob — the one I lent you before."

"But you took my watch as security." The game was developing itself almost automatically.

"Never mind. Pay me my interest, or I'll charge you interest on interest. Remember, I've got your note-of-hand!" shouted Beetle.

"You are a cold-blooded Jew," Stalky groaned.

"Hush!" said McTurk, very loudly indeed, and started as Prout came upon them.

"I didn't see you in that disgraceful affair in the form-room just now," said he.

"What, sir? We're just come up from Mr. King's," said Stalky. "Please, sir, what am I to do about prep.? They've broken the desk you told me to sit at, and the form's just swimming with ink."

"Find another seat — find another seat. D'you expect me to dry-nurse you? I wish to know whether you are in the habit of advancing money to your associates, Beetle?"

"No, sir; not as a general rule, sir."

"It is a most reprehensible habit. I thought that my house, at least, would be free from it. Even with my opinion of you, I hardly thought it was one of your vices."

"There's no harm in lending money, sir, is there?"

"I am not going to bandy words with you on your notions of morality. How much have you lent Corkran?"

"I— I don't quite know," said Beetle. It is difficult to improvise a going concern on the spur of the minute.

"You seemed certain enough just now."

"I think it's two and fourpence," said McTurk, with a glance of cold scorn at Beetle.

the school together for six years. *I* shouldn't care to do it," said Macrea.

"They use the editorial 'we,'" said King, irrelevantly. "It annoys me. 'Where's your prose, Corkran?' 'Well, sir, we haven't quite done it yet.' 'We'll bring it in a minute,' and so on. And the same with the others."

"There's great virtue in that 'we,'" said little Hartopp. "You know I take them for trig. McTurk may have some conception of the meaning of it; but Beetle is as the brutes that perish about sines and cosines. He copies serenely from Stalky, who positively rejoices in mathematics."

"Why don't you stop it?" said Prout.

"It rights itself at the exams. Then Beetle shows up blank sheets, and trusts to his 'English' to save him from a fall. I fancy he spends most of his time with me in writing verse."

"I wish to Heaven he would transfer a little of his energy in that direction to Elegiacs." King jerked himself upright. "He is, with the single exception of Stalky, the very vilest manufacturer of 'barbarous hexameters' that I have ever dealt with."

"The work is combined in that study," said the chaplain. "Stalky does the mathematics, McTurk the Latin, and Beetle attends to their English and French. At least, when he was in the sick-house last month —"

"Malingering," Prout interjected.

"Quite possibly. I found a very distinct falling off in their 'Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre' translations."

"I think it is profoundly immoral," said Prout. "I've always been opposed to the study system."

"It would be hard to find any study where the boys don't help each other; but in Number Five the thing has probably been reduced to a system," said little Hartopp. "They have a system in most things."

"They confess as much," said the Reverend John. "I've seen McTurk being hounded up the stairs to elegise the 'Elegy in a Churchyard,' while Beetle and Stalky went to punt-about."

"It amounts to systematic cribbing," said Prout, his voice growing deeper and deeper.

"No such thing," little Hartopp returned. "You can't teach a cow the violin."

"In intention it is cribbing."

"But we spoke under the seal of the confessional, didn't we?" said the Reverend John.

"You say you've heard them arranging their work in this way, Gillett," Prout persisted.

"Good Heavens! Don't make *me* Queen's evidence, my dear fellow. Hartopp is equally incriminated. If they ever found out that I had sneaked, our relations would suffer — and I value them."

"I think your attitude in this matter is weak," said Prout, looking round for support. "It would be really better to break up the study — for a while — wouldn't it?"

"Oh, break it up by all means," said Macrea. "We shall see then if Gillett's theory holds water."

"Be wise, Prout. Leave them alone, or calamity will overtake you; and what is much more important, they will be annoyed with me. I am too fat, alas! to be worried by bad boys. Where are you going?"

"Nonsense! They would not dare — but I am going to think this out," said Prout. "It needs thought. In intention they cribbed, and I must think out my duty."

"He's perfectly capable of putting the boys on their honour. It's *I* that am a fool." The Reverend John looked round remorsefully. "Never again will I forget that a master is not a man. Mark my words," said the Reverend John. "There will be trouble."

* * * * * * * * * *

But by the yellow Tiber
Was tumult and affright.

Out of the blue sky (they were still rejoicing over the cat war) Mr. Prout had dropped into Number Five, read them a lecture on the enor-

mity of cribbing, and bidden them return to the form-rooms on Monday. They had raged, solo and chorus, all through the peaceful Sabbath, for their sin was more or less the daily practice of all the studies.

"What's the good of cursing?" said Stalky at last. "We're all in the same boat. We've got to go back and consort with the house. A locker in the form-room, and a seat at prep. in Number Twelve." (He looked regretfully round the cosey study which McTurk, their leader in matters of Art, had decorated with a dado, a stencil, and cretonne hangings.)

"Yes! Heffy lurchin' into the form-rooms like a frowzy old retriever, to see if we aren't up to something. You know he never leaves his house alone, these days," said McTurk. "Oh, it will be giddy!"

"Why aren't you down watchin' cricket? I like a robust, healthy boy. You mustn't frowzt in a form-room. Why don't you take an interest in your house? Yah!" quoted Beetle.

"Yes, why don't we? Let's! We'll take an interest in the house. We'll take no end of interest in the house! He hasn't had us in the form-rooms for a year. We've learned a lot since then. Oh, we'll make it a be-autiful house before we've done! 'Member that chap in 'Eric' or 'St. Winifred's'— Belial somebody? I'm goin'

THE IMPRESSIONISTS

THEY had dropped into the chaplain's study for a Saturday night smoke — all four housemasters — and the three briers and the one cigar reeking in amity proved the Reverend John Gillett's good generalship. Since the discovery of the cat, King had been too ready to see affront where none was meant, and the Reverend John, buffer-state and general confidant, had worked for a week to bring about a good understanding. He was fat, clean-shaven, except for a big moustache, of an imperturbable good temper, and, those who loved him least said, a guileful Jesuit. He smiled benignantly upon his handiwork — four sorely tried men talking without very much malice.

"Now remember," he said, when the conversation turned that way, "I impute nothing. But every time that any one has taken direct steps against Number Five study, the issue has been more or less humiliating to the taker."

"I can't admit that. I pulverise the egregious Beetle daily for his soul's good; and the others with him," said King.

"Well, take your own case, King, and go back a couple of years. Do you remember when Prout and you were on their track — for hutting and trespass, wasn't it? Have you forgotten Colonel Dabney?"

The others laughed. King did not care to be reminded of his career as a poacher.

"That was one instance. Again, when you had rooms below them — I always said that that was entering the lion's den — you turned them out."

"For making disgusting noises. Surely, Gillett, you don't excuse —"

"All I say is that you turned them out. That same evening your study was wrecked."

"By Rabbits-Eggs — most beastly drunk — from the road," said King. "What has that — ?"

The Reverend John went on.

"Lastly, they conceive that aspersions are cast upon their personal cleanliness — a most delicate matter with all boys. Ve-ry good. Observe how, in each case, the punishment fits the crime. A week after your house calls them 'stinkers,' King, your house is, not to put too fine a point on it, stunk out by a dead cat who chooses to die in the one spot where she can annoy you most. Again the long arm of coincidence! *Summa.* You accuse them of trespass. Through some absurd chain of circumstances — they may or may not be at the other end of it — you and Prout are made to ap-

pear as trespassers. You evict them. For a time your study is made untenable. I have drawn the parallel in the last case. Well?"

"She was under the centre of White's dormitory," said King. "There are double floor-boards there to deaden noise. No boy, even in my own house, could possibly have pried up the boards without leaving some trace — and Rabbits-Eggs was phenomenally drunk that other night."

"They are singularly favoured by fortune. That is all I ever said. Personally, I like them immensely, and I believe I have a little of their confidence. I confess I like being called 'Padre.' They are at peace with me; consequently I am not treated to bogus confessions of theft."

"You mean Mason's case?" said Prout, heavily. "That always struck me as peculiarly scandalous. I thought the Head should have taken up the matter more thoroughly. Mason may be misguided, but at least he is thoroughly sincere and means well."

"I confess I cannot agree with you, Prout," said the Reverend John. "He jumped at some silly tale of theft on their part; accepted another boy's evidence without, so far as I can see, any inquiry; and — frankly, I think he deserved all he got."

"They deliberately outraged Mason's best feelings," said Prout. "A word to me on their part

would have saved the whole thing. But they preferred to lure him on; to play on his ignorance of their characters —"

"That may be," said King, "but I don't like Mason. I dislike him for the very reason that Prout advances to his credit. He means well."

"Our criminal tradition is not theft — among ourselves, at least," said little Hartopp.

"For the head of a house that raided seven head of cattle from the innocent pot-wallopers of Northam, isn't that rather a sweeping statement?" said Macrea.

"Precisely so," said Hartopp, unabashed. "That, with gate-lifting, and a little poaching and hawk-hunting on the cliffs, is our salvation."

"It does us far more harm as a school —" Prout began.

"Than any hushed-up scandal could? Quite so. Our reputation among the farmers is most unsavoury. But I would much sooner deal with any amount of ingenious crime of that nature than — some other offences."

"They may be all right, but they are unboy-like, abnormal, and, in my opinion, unsound," Prout insisted. "The moral effect of their performances must pave the way for greater harm. It makes me doubtful how to deal with them. I might separate them."

"You might, of course; but they have gone up

afternoon. *Jamais j'ai gloaté comme je gloaterai aujourd'hui. Nous bunkerons aux* bunkers."

And it seemed good to them so to do.

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Down in the basement, where the gas flickers and the boots stand in racks, Richards, amid his blacking-brushes, held forth to Oke of the Common-room, Gumbly of the dining-halls, and fair Lena of the laundry.

"Yiss. Her were in a shockin' staate an' condition. Her nigh made me sick, I tal 'ee. But I rowted 'un out, an' I rowted 'un out, an' I made all shipshape, though her smelt like to bilges."

"Her died mousin', I rackon, poor thing," said Lena.

"Then her moused different to any made cat o' God's world, Lena. I up with the top-board, an' she were lyin' on her back, an' I turned 'un ovver with the brume-handle, an' 'twas her back was all covered with the plaster from 'twixt the lathin'. Yiss, I tal 'ee. An' under her head there lay, like, so's to say, a little pillow o' plaster druv up in front of her by raison of her slidin' along on her back. No cat niver went mousin' on her back, Lena. Some one had shoved her along right underneath, so far as they could shove 'un. Cats don't make theyselves pillows for to die on. Shoved along, she were, when she was settin' for to be cold, laike."

"Oh, yeou'm too clever to live, Fatty. Yeou go get wed an' taught some sense," said Lena, the affianced of Gumbly.

"'Larned a little 'fore iver some maidens was born. Sarved in the Queen's Navy, I have, where yeou'm taught to use your eyes. Yeou go 'tend your own business, Lena."

"Do 'ee mean what yeou'm been tellin' us?" said Oke.

"Ask me no questions, I'll give 'ee no lies. Bullet-hole clane thru from side to side, an' tu heart-ribs broke like withies. I seed 'un when I turned 'un ovver. They'm clever, oh, they'm clever, but they'm not too clever for old Richards! 'Twas on the born tip o' my tongue to tell, tu, but . . . he said us niver washed, he did. Let his dom boys call us 'stinkers,' he did. Sarve 'un dom well raight, I say!"

Richards spat on a fresh boot and fell to his work, chuckling.

THE IMPRESSIONISTS

with which you have seen fit to infect your house. . . . Oh, bother! I've forgotten the rest, but it was very beautiful. Aren't you grateful to us for labourin' with you this way, Rattray? Lots of chaps 'ud never have taken the trouble, but we're grateful, Rattray."

"Yes, we're horrid grateful," grunted McTurk. "We don't forget that soap. *We're* polite. Why ain't you polite, Rat?"

"Hallo!" Stalky cantered up, his cap over one eye. "Exhortin' the Whiffers, eh? I'm afraid they're too far gone to repent. Rattray! White! Perowne! Malpas! No answer. This is distressin'. This is truly distressin'. Bring out your dead, you glandered lepers!"

"You think yourself funny, don't you?" said Rattray, stung from his dignity by this last. "It's only a rat or something under the floor. We're going to have it up to-morrow."

"Don't try to shuffle it off on a poor dumb animal, and dead, too. I loathe prevarication. 'Pon my soul, Rattray —"

"Hold on. The Hartoffles never said 'Pon my soul' in all his little life," said Beetle, critically.

("Ah!" said Prout to little Hartopp.)

"Upon my word, sir, upon my word, sir, I expected better things of you, Rattray. Why can you not own up to your misdeeds like a man? Have *I* ever shown any lack of confidence in *you?*"

("It's not brutality," murmured little Hartopp, as though answering a question no one had asked. "It's boy; only boy.")

"And this was the house" — Stalky changed from a pecking, fluttering voice to tragic earnestness — "this was the — the — open cesspit that dared to call us 'stinkers.' And now — and now, it tries to shelter itself behind a dead rat. You annoy me, Rattray. You disgust me! You irritate me unspeakably! Thank Heaven, I am a man of equable temper —"

("This is to your address, Macrea," said Prout. "I fear so, I fear so.")

"Or I should scarcely be able to contain myself before your mocking visage."

"*Cavé!*" in an undertone. Beetle had spied King sailing down the corridor.

"And what may you be doing here, my little friends?" the house-master began. "I had a fleeting notion — correct me if I am wrong" (the listeners with one accord choked) — "that if I found you outside my house I should visit you with dire pains and penalties."

"We were just goin' for a walk, sir," said Beetle.

"And you stopped to speak to Rattray *en route?*"

"Yes, sir. We've been throwing golf-balls," said Rattray, coming out of the study.

("Old Rat is more of a diplomat than I thought. So far he is strictly within the truth," said little Hartopp. "Observe the ethics of it, Prout.")

"Oh, you were sporting with them, were you? I must say I do not envy you your choice of associates. I fancied they might have been engaged in some of the prurient discourse with which they have been so disgustingly free of late. I should strongly advise you to direct your steps most carefully in the future. Pick up those golf-balls." He passed on.

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Next day Richards, who had been a carpenter in the Navy, and to whom odd jobs were confided, was ordered to take up a dormitory floor; for Mr. King held that something must have died there.

"We need not neglect all our work for a trumpery incident of this nature; though I am quite aware that little things please little minds. Yes, I have decreed the boards to be taken up after lunch under Richards's auspices. I have no doubt it will be vastly interesting to a certain type of so-called intellect; but any boy of my house or another's found on the dormitory stairs will *ipso facto* render himself liable to three hundred lines."

The boys did not collect on the stairs, but most of them waited outside King's. Richards had been bound to cry the news from the attic window, and, if possible, to exhibit the corpse.

"'Tis a cat, a dead cat!" Richards's face showed purple at the window. He had been in the chamber of death and on his knees for some time.

"Cat be blowed!" cried McTurk. "It's a dead fag left over from last term. Three cheers for King's dead fag!"

They cheered lustily.

"Show it, show it! Let's have a squint at it!" yelled the juniors. "Give her to the Bug-hunters." (This was the Natural History Society.) "The cat looked at the King — and died of it! Hoosh! Yai! Yaow! Maiow! Ftzz!" were some of the cries that followed.

Again Richards appeared.

"She've been" — he checked himself suddenly — "dead a long taime."

The school roared.

"Well, come on out for a walk," said Stalky in a well-chosen pause. "It's all very disgustin', and I do hope the Lazar-house won't do it again."

"Do what?" a King's boy cried furiously.

"Kill a poor innocent cat every time you want to get off washing. It's awfully hard to distinguish between you as it is. I prefer the cat, I must say. She isn't quite so whiff. What are you goin' to do, Beetle?"

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"You might, of course; but they have gone up

the school together for six years. *I* shouldn't care to do it," said Macrea.

"They use the editorial 'we,'" said King, irrelevantly. "It annoys me. 'Where's your prose, Corkran?' 'Well, sir, we haven't quite done it yet.' 'We'll bring it in a minute,' and so on. And the same with the others."

"There's great virtue in that 'we,'" said little Hartopp. "You know I take them for trig. McTurk may have some conception of the meaning of it; but Beetle is as the brutes that perish about sines and cosines. He copies serenely from Stalky, who positively rejoices in mathematics."

"Why don't you stop it?" said Prout.

"It rights itself at the exams. Then Beetle shows up blank sheets, and trusts to his 'English' to save him from a fall. I fancy he spends most of his time with me in writing verse."

"I wish to Heaven he would transfer a little of his energy in that direction to Elegiacs." King jerked himself upright. "He is, with the single exception of Stalky, the very vilest manufacturer of 'barbarous hexameters' that I have ever dealt with."

"The work is combined in that study," said the chaplain. "Stalky does the mathematics, McTurk the Latin, and Beetle attends to their English and French. At least, when he was in the sick-house last month —"

"Malingering," Prout interjected.

"Quite possibly. I found a very distinct falling off in their 'Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre' translations."

"I think it is profoundly immoral," said Prout. "I've always been opposed to the study system."

"It would be hard to find any study where the boys don't help each other; but in Number Five the thing has probably been reduced to a system," said little Hartopp. "They have a system in most things."

"They confess as much," said the Reverend John. "I've seen McTurk being hounded up the stairs to elegise the 'Elegy in a Churchyard,' while Beetle and Stalky went to punt-about."

"It amounts to systematic cribbing," said Prout, his voice growing deeper and deeper.

"No such thing," little Hartopp returned. "You can't teach a cow the violin."

"In intention it is cribbing."

"But we spoke under the seal of the confessional, didn't we?" said the Reverend John.

"You say you've heard them arranging their work in this way, Gillett," Prout persisted.

"Good Heavens! Don't make *me* Queen's evidence, my dear fellow. Hartopp is equally incriminated. If they ever found out that I had sneaked, our relations would suffer — and I value them."

"I think your attitude in this matter is weak," said Prout, looking round for support. "It would be really better to break up the study — for a while — wouldn't it?"

"Oh, break it up by all means," said Macrea. "We shall see then if Gillett's theory holds water."

"Be wise, Prout. Leave them alone, or calamity will overtake you; and what is much more important, they will be annoyed with me. I am too fat, alas! to be worried by bad boys. Where are you going?"

"Nonsense! They would not dare — but I am going to think this out," said Prout. "It needs thought. In intention they cribbed, and I must think out my duty."

"He's perfectly capable of putting the boys on their honour. It's *I* that am a fool." The Reverend John looked round remorsefully. "Never again will I forget that a master is not a man. Mark my words," said the Reverend John. "There will be trouble."

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Was tumult and affright.

Out of the blue sky (they were still rejoicing over the cat war) Mr. Prout had dropped into Number Five, read them a lecture on the enor-

mity of cribbing, and bidden them return to the form-rooms on Monday. They had raged, solo and chorus, all through the peaceful Sabbath, for their sin was more or less the daily practice of all the studies.

"What's the good of cursing?" said Stalky at last. "We're all in the same boat. We've got to go back and consort with the house. A locker in the form-room, and a seat at prep. in Number Twelve." (He looked regretfully round the cosey study which McTurk, their leader in matters of Art, had decorated with a dado, a stencil, and cretonne hangings.)

"Yes! Heffy lurchin' into the form-rooms like a frowzy old retriever, to see if we aren't up to something. You know he never leaves his house alone, these days," said McTurk. "Oh, it will be giddy!"

"Why aren't you down watchin' cricket? I like a robust, healthy boy. You mustn't frowzt in a form-room. Why don't you take an interest in your house? Yah!" quoted Beetle.

"Yes, why don't we? Let's! We'll take an interest in the house. We'll take no end of interest in the house! He hasn't had us in the form-rooms for a year. We've learned a lot since then. Oh, we'll make it a be-autiful house before we've done! 'Member that chap in 'Eric' or 'St. Winifred's'—Belial somebody? I'm goin'

to be Belial," said Stalky, with an ensnaring grin.

"Right O," said Beetle, "and I'll be Mammon. I'll lend money at usury — that's what they do at all schools accordin' to the B. O. P. Penny a week on a shillin'. That'll startle Heffy's weak intellect. You can be Lucifer, Turkey."

"What have I got to do?" McTurk also smiled.

"Head conspiracies — and cabals — and boycotts. Go in for that 'stealthy intrigue' that Heffy is always talkin' about. Come on!"

The house received them on their fall with the mixture of jest and sympathy always extended to boys turned out of their study. The known aloofness of the three made them more interesting.

"Quite like old times, ain't it?" Stalky selected a locker and flung in his books. "We've come to sport with you, my young friends, for a while, because our beloved house-master has hove us out of our diggin's."

"'Serve you jolly well right," said Orrin, "you cribbers!"

"This will never do," said Stalky. "We can't maintain our giddy prestige, Orrin, de-ah, if you make these remarks."

They wrapped themselves lovingly about the boy, thrust him to the opened window, and drew down the sash to the nape of his neck. With an

equal swiftness they tied his thumbs together behind his back with a piece of twine, and then, because he kicked furiously, removed his shoes.

There Mr. Prout happened to find him a few minutes later, guillotined and helpless, surrounded by a convulsed crowd who would not assist.

Stalky, in an upper form-room, had gathered himself allies against vengeance. Orrin presently tore up at the head of a boarding party, and the form-room grew one fog of dust through which boys wrestled, stamped, shouted, and yelled. A desk was carried away in the tumult, a knot of warriors reeled into and split a door-panel, a window was broken, and a gas-jet fell. Under cover of the confusion the three escaped to the corridor, whence they called in and sent up passers-by to the fray.

"Rescue, Kings! Kings! Kings! Number Twelve form-room! Rescue, Prouts — Prouts! Rescue, Macreas! Rescue, Hartopps!"

The juniors hurried out like bees aswarm, asking no questions, clattered up the staircase, and added themselves to the embroilment.

"Not bad for the first evening's work," said Stalky, rearranging his collar. "I fancy Prout'll be somewhat annoyed. We'd better establish an *alibi*." So they sat on Mr. King's railings till prep.

"You see," quoth Stalky, as they strolled up to prep. with the ignoble herd, "if you get the houses well mixed up an' scufflin', it's even bettin' that

some ass will start a real row. Hullo, Orrin, you look rather metagrobolised."

"It was all your fault, you beast! You started it. We've got two hundred lines apiece, and Heffy's lookin' for you. Just see what that swine Malpas did to my eye!"

"I like your saying *we* started it. Who called us cribbers? Can't your infant mind connect cause and effect yet? Some day you'll find out that it don't pay to jest with Number Five."

"Where's that shillin' you owe me?" said Beetle, suddenly.

Stalky could not see Prout behind him, but returned the lead without a quaver.

"I only owed you ninepence, you old usurer."

"You've forgotten the interest," said McTurk. "A halfpenny a week per bob is Beetle's charge. You must be beastly rich, Beetle."

"Well, Beetle lent me sixpence." Stalky came to a full stop and made as to work it out on his fingers. "Sixpence on the nineteenth, didn't he?"

"Yes; but you've forgotten you paid no interest on the other bob — the one I lent you before."

"But you took my watch as security." The game was developing itself almost automatically.

"Never mind. Pay me my interest, or I'll charge you interest on interest. Remember, I've got your note-of-hand!" shouted Beetle.

"You are a cold-blooded Jew," Stalky groaned.

"Hush!" said McTurk, very loudly indeed, and started as Prout came upon them.

"I didn't see you in that disgraceful affair in the form-room just now," said he.

"What, sir? We're just come up from Mr. King's," said Stalky. "Please, sir, what am I to do about prep.? They've broken the desk you told me to sit at, and the form's just swimming with ink."

"Find another seat — find another seat. D'you expect me to dry-nurse you? I wish to know whether you are in the habit of advancing money to your associates, Beetle?"

"No, sir; not as a general rule, sir."

"It is a most reprehensible habit. I thought that my house, at least, would be free from it. Even with my opinion of you, I hardly thought it was one of your vices."

"There's no harm in lending money, sir, is there?"

"I am not going to bandy words with you on your notions of morality. How much have you lent Corkran?"

"I— I don't quite know," said Beetle. It is difficult to improvise a going concern on the spur of the minute.

"You seemed certain enough just now."

"I think it's two and fourpence," said McTurk, with a glance of cold scorn at Beetle.

In the hopelessly involved finances of the study there was just that sum to which both McTurk and Beetle laid claim, as their share in the pledging of Stalky's second-best Sunday trousers. But Stalky had maintained for two terms that the money was his "commission" for effecting the pawn; and had, of course, spent it on a study "brew."

"Understand this, then. You are not to continue your operations as a money-lender. Two and fourpence, you said, Corkran?"

Stalky had said nothing, and continued so to do.

"Your influence for evil is quite strong enough without buying a hold over your companions." He felt in his pockets, and (oh joy!) produced a florin and fourpence. "Bring me what you call Corkran's note-of-hand, and be thankful that I do not carry the matter any further. The money is stopped from your pocket-money, Corkran. The receipt to my study, at once."

Little they cared! Two and fourpence in a lump is worth six weekly sixpences any hungry day of the week.

"But what the dooce *is* a note-of-hand?" said Beetle. "I only read about it in a book."

"Now you've jolly well got to make one," said Stalky.

"Yes — but our ink don't turn black till next day. S'pose he'll spot that?"

"Not him. He's too worried," said McTurk. "Sign your name on a bit of impot-paper, Stalky, and write, 'I O U two and fourpence.' Aren't you grateful to me for getting that out of Prout? Stalky'd never have paid. . . . Why, you ass!"

Mechanically Beetle had handed over the money to Stalky as treasurer of the study. The custom of years is not lightly broken.

In return for the document, Prout expounded to Beetle the enormity of money-lending, which, like everything except compulsory cricket, corrupted houses and destroyed good feeling among boys, made youth cold and calculating, and opened the door to all evil. Finally, did Beetle know of any other cases? If so, it was his duty as proof of repentance to let his house-master know. No names need be mentioned.

Beetle did not know — at least, he was not quite sure, sir. How could he give evidence against his friends? The house might, of course — here he feigned an anguished delicacy — be full of it. He was not in a position to say. He had not met with any open competition in his trade; but if Mr. Prout considered it was a matter that affected the honour of the house (Mr. Prout did consider it precisely that), perhaps the house-prefects would be better . . .

He spun it out till half-way through prep.

"And," said the amateur Shylock, returning to

the form-room and dropping at Stalky's side, "if he don't think the house is putrid with it, I'm several Dutchmen—that's all. . . . I've been to Mr. Prout's study, sir." This to the prep.-master. "He said I could sit where I liked, sir. . . . Oh, he is just tricklin' with emotion. . . . Yes, sir, I'm only askin' Corkran to let me have a dip in his ink."

After prayers, on the road to the dormitories, Harrison and Craye, senior house-prefects, zealous in their office, waylaid them with great anger.

"What have you been doing to Heffy this time, Beetle? He's been jawin' us all the evening."

"What has His Serene Transparency been vexin' you for?" said McTurk.

"About Beetle lendin' money to Stalky," began Harrison; "and then Beetle went and told him that there was any amount of money-lendin' in the house."

"No, you don't," said Beetle, sitting on a boot-basket. "That's just what I didn't tell him. I spoke the giddy truth. He asked me if there was much of it in the house; and I said I didn't know."

"He thinks you're a set of filthy Shylocks," said McTurk. "It's just as well for you he don't think you're burglars. You know he never gets a notion out of his conscientious old head."

"Well-meanin' man. Did it all for the best." Stalky curled gracefully round the stair-rail.

"Head in a drain-pipe. Full confession in the left boot. Bad for the honour of the house — very."

"Shut up," said Harrison. "You chaps always behave as if you were jawin' us when we come to jaw you."

"You're a lot too cheeky," said Craye.

"I don't quite see where the cheek comes in, except on your part, in interferin' with a private matter between me an' Beetle after it has been settled by Prout." Stalky winked cheerfully at the others.

"That's the worst of clever little swots," said McTurk, addressing the gas. "They get made prefects before they have any tact, and then they annoy chaps who could really help 'em to look after the honour of the house."

"We won't trouble you to do that!" said Craye, hotly.

"Then what are you badgerin' us for?" said Beetle. "On your own showing, you've been so beastly slack, looking after the house, that Prout believes it's a nest of money-lenders. I've told him that I've lent money to Stalky, and no one else. I don't know whether he believes me, but that finishes my case. The rest is *your* business."

"Now we find out," Stalky's voice rose, "that there is apparently an organised conspiracy throughout the house. For aught we know, the

fags may be lendin' and borrowin' far beyond their means. *We* aren't responsible for it. We're only the rank and file."

"Are you surprised we don't wish to associate with the house?" said McTurk, with dignity. "We've kept ourselves to ourselves in our study till we were turned out, and now we find ourselves let in for — for this sort of thing. It's simply disgraceful."

"Then you hector and bullyrag us on the stairs," said Stalky, "about matters that are your business entirely. You know we aren't prefects."

"You threatened us with a prefect's lickin' just now," said Beetle, boldly inventing as he saw the bewilderment in the faces of the enemy.

"And if you expect you'll gain anything from us by your way of approachin' us, you're jolly well mistaken. That's all. Good night."

They clattered up-stairs, injured virtue on every inch of their backs.

"But — but what the dickens have *we* done?" said Harrison, amazedly, to Craye.

"I don't know. Only — it always happens that way when one has anything to do with them. They're so beastly plausible."

And Mr. Prout called the good boys into his study anew, and succeeded in sinking both his and their innocent minds ten fathoms deeper in blindfolded bedazement. He spoke of steps and

measures, of tone and loyalty in the house and to the house, and urged them to take up the matter tactfully.

So they demanded of Beetle whether he had any connection with any other establishment. Beetle promptly went to his house-master, and wished to know by what right Harrison and Craye had reopened a matter already settled between him and his house-master. In injured innocence no boy excelled Beetle.

Then it occurred to Prout that he might have been unfair to the culprit, who had not striven to deny or palliate his offence. He sent for Harrison and Craye, reprehending them very gently for the tone they had adopted to a repentant sinner, and when they returned to their study, they used the language of despair. They then made headlong inquisition through the house, driving the fags to the edge of hysterics, and unearthing, with tremendous pomp and parade, the natural and inevitable system of small loans that prevails among small boys.

"You see, Harrison, Thornton minor lent me a penny last Saturday, because I was fined for breaking the window; and I spent it at Keyte's. I didn't know there was any harm in it. And Wray major borrowed twopence from me when my uncle sent me a post-office order — I cashed it at Keyte's — for five bob; but he'll pay me back

before the holidays. We didn't know there was anything wrong in it."

They waded through hours of this kind of thing, but found no usury, or anything approaching to Beetle's gorgeous scale of interest. The seniors — for the school had no tradition of deference to prefects outside compulsory games — told them succinctly to go about their business. They would not give evidence on any terms. Harrison was one idiot, and Craye was another; but the greatest of all, they said, was their house-master.

When a house is thoroughly upset, however good its conscience, it breaks into knots and coteries — small gatherings in the twilight, box-room committees, and groups in the corridor. And when from group to group, with an immense affectation of secrecy, three wicked boys steal, crying "*Cavé!*" when there is no need of caution, and whispering "Don't tell!" on the heels of trumpery confidences that instant invented, a very fine air of plot and intrigue can be woven round such a house.

At the end of a few days, it dawned on Prout that he moved in an atmosphere of perpetual ambush. Mysteries hedged him on all sides, warnings ran before his heavy feet, and countersigns were muttered behind his attentive back. McTurk and Stalky invented many absurd and idle phrases — catch-words that swept through the

house as fire through stubble. It was a rare jest, and the only practical outcome of the Usury Commission, that one boy should say to a friend, with awful gravity, "Do you think there's much of it going on in the house?" The other would reply, "Well, one can't be too careful, you know." The effect on a house-master of humane conscience and good intent may be imagined. Again, a man who has sincerely devoted himself to gaining the esteem of his charges does not like to hear himself described, even at a distance, as "Popularity Prout" by a dark and scowling Celt with a fluent tongue. A rumour that stories — unusual stories — are told in the form-rooms, between the lights, by a boy who does not command his confidence, agitates such a man; and even elaborate and tender politeness — for the courtesy wise-grown men offer to a bewildered child was the courtesy that Stalky wrapped round Prout — restores not his peace of mind.

"The tone of the house seems changed — changed for the worse," said Prout to Harrison and Craye. "Have you noticed it? I don't for an instant impute —"

He never imputed anything; but, on the other hand, he never did anything else, and, with the best intentions in the world, he had reduced the house-prefects to a state as nearly bordering on nervous irritation as healthy boys can know.

Worst of all, they began at times to wonder whether Stalky & Co. had not some truth in their often-repeated assertions that Prout was a gloomy ass.

"As you know, I am not the kind of man who puts himself out for every little thing he hears. *I* believe in letting the house work out their own salvation — with a light guiding hand on the reins, of course. But there is a perceptible lack of reverence — a lower tone in matters that touch the honour of the house, a sort of hardness."

"Oh, Prout he is a nobleman, a nobleman, a nobleman!
Our Heffy is a nobleman —
He does an awful lot,
Because his popularity —
Oh, pop-u-pop-u-larity —
His giddy popularity
Would suffer did he not!"

The study door stood ajar; and the song, borne by twenty clear voices, came faint from a form-room. The fags rather liked the tune; the words were Beetle's.

"That's a thing no sensible man objects to," said Prout, with a lopsided smile; "but you know straws show which way the wind blows. Can you trace it to any direct influence? I am speaking to you now as heads of the house."

"There isn't the least doubt of it," said Harrison, angrily. "I know what you mean, sir. It all

began when Number Five study came to the form-rooms. There's no use blinkin' it, Craye. You know that, too."

"They make things rather difficult for us, sometimes," said Craye. "It's more their manner than anything else, that Harrison means."

"Do they hamper you in the discharge of your duties, then?"

"Well, no, sir. They only look on and grin — and turn up their noses generally."

"Ah," said Prout, sympathetically.

"I think, sir," said Craye, plunging into the business boldly, "it would be a great deal better if they were sent back to their study — better for the house. They are rather old to be knocking about the form-rooms."

"They are younger than Orrin, or Flint, and a dozen others that I can think of."

"Yes, sir; but that's different, somehow. They're rather influential. They have a knack of upsettin' things in a quiet way that one can't take hold of. At least, if one does —"

"And you think they would be better in their own study again?"

Emphatically Harrison and Craye were of that opinion. As Harrison said to Craye, afterwards, "They've weakened our authority. They're too big to lick; they've made an exhibition of us over this usury business, and we're a laughing-stock to

the rest of the school. I'm going up [for Sandhurst, understood] next term. They've managed to knock me out of half my work already with their — their lunacy. If they go back to their study we may have a little peace."

"Hullo, Harrison!" McTurk ambled round the corner, with a roving eye on all possible horizons. "Bearin' up, old man? That's right. Live it down! Live it down!"

"What d'you mean?"

"You look a little pensive," said McTurk. "Exhaustin' job superintendin' the honour of the house, ain't it? By the way, how are you off for mares'-nests?"

"Look here," said Harrison, hoping for instant reward. "We've recommended Prout to let you go back to your study."

"The dooce you have! And who under the sun are *you* to interfere between us and our housemaster? Upon my Sam, you two try us very hard — you do, indeed. Of course we don't know how far you abuse your position to prejudice us with Mr. Prout; but when you deliberately stop me to tell me you've been makin' arrangements behind our back — in secret — with Prout — I — I don't know really what we ought to do."

"That's beastly unfair!" cried Craye.

"It is." McTurk had adopted a ghastly solemnity that sat well on his long, lean face.

"Hang it all! A prefect's one thing and an usher's another; but you seem to combine 'em. You recommend this — you recommend that! *You* say how and when we go back to our study!"

"But — but — we thought you'd like it, Turkey. We did, indeed. You know you'll be ever so much more comfortable there." Harrison's voice was almost tearful.

McTurk turned away as though to hide his emotions.

"They're broke!" He hunted up Stalky and Beetle in a box-room. "They're sick! They've been beggin' Heffy to let us go back to Number Five. Poor devils! Poor little devils!"

"It's the olive branch," was Stalky's comment. "It's the giddy white flag, by gum! Come to think of it, we *have* metagrobolised 'em."

Just after tea that day, Mr. Prout sent for them to say that if they chose to ruin their future by neglecting their work, it was entirely their own affair. He wished them, however, to understand that their presence in the form-rooms could not be tolerated one hour longer. He personally did not care to think of the time he must spend in eliminating the traces of their evil influences. How far Beetle had pandered to the baser side of youthful imagination he would ascertain later; and Beetle might be sure that if Mr. Prout came across any soul-corrupting consequences —

"Consequences of what, sir?" said Beetle, genuinely bewildered this time; and McTurk quietly kicked him on the ankle for being "fetched" by Prout.

Beetle, the house-master continued, knew very well what was intended. Evil and brief had been their careers under his eye; and as one standing *in loco parentis* to their yet uncontaminated associates, he was bound to take his precautions. The return of the study key closed the sermon.

"But what was the baser-side-of-imagination business?" said Beetle on the stairs.

"I never knew such an ass as you are for justifyin' yourself," said McTurk. "I hope I jolly well skinned your ankle. Why do you let yourself be drawn by everybody?"

"Draws be blowed! I must have tickled him up in some way I didn't know about. If I'd had a notion of that before, of course I could have rubbed it in better. It's too late now. What a pity! 'Baser side.' What *was* he drivin' at?"

"Never mind," said Stalky. "I knew we could make it a happy little house. I said so, remember—but I swear I didn't think we'd do it so soon."

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"No," said Prout most firmly in Common-room. "I maintain that Gillett is wrong. True, I let them return to their study."

"With your known views on cribbing, too?"

purred little Hartopp. "What an immoral compromise!"

"One moment," said the Reverend John. "I—we—all of us have exercised an absolutely heart-breaking discretion for the last ten days. Now we want to know. Confess—have you known a happy minute since—"

"As regards my house, I have not," said Prout. "But you are entirely wrong in your estimate of those boys. In justice to the others—in self-defence—"

"Ha! I said it would come to that," murmured the Reverend John.

"—I was forced to send them back. Their moral influence was unspeakable—simply un-unspeakable."

And bit by bit he told his tale, beginning with Beetle's usury, and ending with the house-prefects' appeal.

"Beetle in the *rôle* of Shylock is new to me," said King, with twitching lips. "I heard rumours of it—"

"Before?" said Prout.

"No, after you had dealt with them; but I was careful not to inquire. I never interfere with—"

"I myself," said Hartopp, "would cheerfully give him five shillings if he could work out one simple sum in compound interest without three gross errors."

"Why — why — why!" Mason, the mathematical master, stuttered, a fierce joy on his face, "you've been bad — precisely the same as me!"

"And so you held an inquiry?" Little Hartopp's voice drowned Mason's ere Prout caught the import of the sentence.

"The boy himself hinted at the existence of a good deal of it in the house," said Prout.

"He is passed master in that line," said the chaplain. "But, as regards the honour of the house — "

"They lowered it in a week. I have striven to build it up for years. My own house-prefects — and boys do not willingly complain of each other — besought me to get rid of them. You say you have their confidence, Gillett: they may tell you another tale. As far as I am concerned, they may go to the devil in their own way. I'm sick and tired of them," said Prout, bitterly.

But it was the Reverend John, with a smiling countenance, who went to the devil just after Number Five had cleared away a very pleasant little brew (it cost them two and fourpence) and was settling down to prep.

"Come in, Padre, come in," said Stalky, thrusting forward the best chair. "We've only met you official-like these last ten days."

"You were under sentence," said the Reverend John. "I do not consort with malefactors."

"Ah, but we're restored again," said McTurk. 'Mr. Prout has relented."

"Without a stain on our characters," said Beetle. "It was a painful episode, Padre, most painful."

"Now, consider for a while, and perpend, *mes enfants*. It is about your characters that I've called to-night. In the language of the schools, what the dooce *have* you been up to in Mr. Prout's house? It isn't anything to laugh over. He says that you so lowered the tone of the house he had to pack you back to your studies. Is that true?"

"Every word of it, Padre."

"Don't be flippant, Turkey. Listen to me. I've told you very often that no boys in the school have a greater influence for good or evil than you have. You know I don't talk about ethics and moral codes, because I don't believe that the young of the human animal realises what they mean for some years to come. All the same, I don't want to think you've been perverting the juniors. Don't interrupt, Beetle. Listen to me! Mr. Prout has a notion that you have been corrupting your associates somehow or other."

"Mr. Prout has so many notions, Padre," said Beetle, wearily. "Which one is this?"

"Well, he tells me that he heard you telling a story in the twilight in the form-room, in a whisper. And Orrin said, just as he opened the door, 'Shut up, Beetle; it's too beastly.' Now, then?"

"You remember Mrs. Oliphant's 'Beleaguered City' that you lent me last term?" said Beetle.

The Padre nodded.

"I got the notion out of that. Only, instead of a city, I made it the Coll in a fog — besieged by ghosts of dead boys, who hauled chaps out of their beds in the dormitory. All the names are quite real. You tell it in a whisper, you know — with the names. Orrin didn't like it one little bit. None of 'em have ever let me finish it. It gets just awful at the end part."

"But why in the world didn't you explain to Mr. Prout, instead of leaving him under the impression —?"

"Padre Sahib," said McTurk, "it isn't the least good explainin' to Mr. Prout. If he hasn't one impression, he's bound to have another."

"He'd do it with the best o' motives. He's *in loco parentis*," purred Stalky.

"You young demons!" the Reverend John replied. "And am I to understand that the — the usury business was another of your house-master's impressions?"

"Well — we helped a little in that," said Stalky. "I did owe Beetle two and fourpence — at least, Beetle says I did, but I never intended to pay him. Then we started a bit of an argument on the stairs, and — and Mr. Prout dropped into it accidental. That was how it was, Padre. He paid me cash

down like a giddy Dook (stopped it out of my pocket-money just the same), and Beetle gave him my note-of-hand all correct. I don't know what happened after that."

"I was too truthful," said Beetle. "I always am. You see, he was under an impression, Padre, and I suppose I ought to have corrected that impression; but of course I couldn't be *quite* certain that his house wasn't given over to money-lendin', could I? I thought the house-prefects might know more about it than I did. They ought to. They're giddy palladiums of public schools."

"They did, too—by the time they'd finished," said McTurk. "As nice a pair of conscientious, well-meanin', upright, pure-souled boys as you'd ever want to meet, Padre. They turned the house upside down — Harrison and Craye — with the best motives in the world."

"They said so. 'They said it very loud and clear. They went and shouted in our ear,'" said Stalky.

"My own private impression is that all three of you will infallibly be hanged," said the Reverend John.

"Why, *we* didn't do anything," McTurk replied. "It was all Mr. Prout. Did you ever read a book about Japanese wrestlers? My uncle — he's in the Navy — gave me a beauty once."

"Don't try to change the subject, Turkey."

"I'm not, sir. I'm givin' an illustration — same as a sermon. These wrestler-chaps have got some sort of trick that lets the other chap do all the work. Then they give a little wriggle, and he upsets himself. It's called *shibbuwichee* or *tokonoma*, or somethin'. Mr. Prout's a *shibbuwicher*. It isn't our fault."

"Did you suppose we went round corruptin' the minds of the fags?" said Beetle. "They haven't any, to begin with; and if they had, they're corrupted long ago. I've been a fag, Padre."

"Well, I fancied I knew the normal range of your iniquities; but if you take so much trouble to pile up circumstantial evidence against yourselves, you can't blame any one if—"

"We don't blame any one, Padre. We haven't said a word against Mr. Prout, have we?" Stalky looked at the others. "We love him. He hasn't a notion how we love him."

"H'm! You dissemble your love very well. Have you ever thought who got you turned out of your study in the first place?"

"It was Mr. Prout turned us out," said Stalky, with significance.

"Well, I was that man. I didn't mean it; but some words of mine, I'm afraid, gave Mr. Prout the impression—"

Number Five laughed aloud.

"You see it's just the same thing with you,

Padre," said McTurk. "He *is* quick to get an impression, ain't he? But you mustn't think we don't love him, 'cause we do. There isn't an ounce of vice about him."

A double knock fell on the door.

"The Head to see Number Five study in his study at once," said the voice of Foxy, the school-sergeant.

"Whew!" said the Reverend John. "It seems to me that there is a great deal of trouble coming for some people."

"My word! Mr. Prout's gone and told the Head," said Stalky. "He's a moral double-ender. Not fair, luggin' the Head into a house-row."

"I should recommend a copy-book on a — h'm — safe and certain part," said the Reverend John, disinterestedly.

"Huh! He licks across the shoulders, an' it would slam like a beastly barn door," said Beetle. "Good night, Padre. We're in for it."

Once more they stood in the presence of the Head — Belial, Mammon, and Lucifer. But they had to deal with a man more subtle than them all. Mr. Prout had talked to him, heavily and sadly, for half an hour; and the Head had seen all that was hidden from the house-master.

"You've been bothering Mr. Prout," he said pensively. "House-masters aren't here to be bothered by boys more than is necessary. I don't

like being bothered by these things. You are bothering *me*. That is a very serious offence. You see it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, now, I purpose to bother you, on personal and private grounds, because you have broken into my time. You are much too big to lick, so I suppose I shall have to mark my displeasure in some other way. Say, a thousand lines apiece, a week's gating, and a few things of that kind. Much too big to lick, aren't you?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Stalky, cheerfully; for a week's gating in the summer term is serious.

"Ve-ry good. Then we will do what we can. I wish you wouldn't bother me."

It was a fair, sustained, equable stroke, with a little draw to it, but what they felt most was his unfairness in stopping to talk between executions. Thus:

"Among the — lower classes this would lay me open to a charge of — assault. You should be more grateful for your — privileges than you are. There is a limit — one finds it by experience, Beetle — beyond which it is never safe to pursue private vendettas, because — don't move — sooner or later one comes — into collision with the — higher authority, who has studied the animal. *Et ego* — McTurk, please — *in Arcadia vixi*. There's a certain flagrant injustice about this that ought to

appeal to — your temperament. And that's all! You will tell your house-master that you have been formally caned by me."

"My word!" said McTurk, wriggling his shoulder-blades all down the corridor. "That was business! The Prooshan Bates has an infernal straight eye."

"Wasn't it wily of me to ask for the lickin'," said Stalky, "instead of those impots?"

"Rot! We were in for it from the first. *I* knew the cock of his old eye," said Beetle. "I was within an inch of blubbing."

"Well, I didn't exactly smile," Stalky confessed.

"Let's go down to the lavatory and have a look at the damage. One of us can hold the glass and t'others can squint."

They proceeded on these lines for some ten minutes. The wales were very red and very level. There was not a penny to choose between any of them for thoroughness, efficiency, and a certain clarity of outline that stamps the work of the artist.

"What are you doing down there?" Mr. Prout was at the head of the lavatory stairs, attracted by the noise of splashing.

"We've only been caned by the Head, sir, and we're washing off the blood. The Head said we were to tell you. We were coming to report our-

selves in a minute, sir. (*Sotto voce.*) That's a score for Heffy!"

"Well, he deserves to score something, poor devil," said McTurk, putting on his shirt. "We've sweated a stone and a half off him since we began."

"But look here, why aren't we wrathy with the Head? He said it was a flagrant injustice. So it is!" said Beetle.

"Dear man," said McTurk, and vouchsafed no further answer.

It was Stalky who laughed till he had to hold on by the edge of a basin.

"You *are* a funny ass! What's that for?" said Beetle.

"I'm —I'm thinking of the flagrant injustice of it!"

THE MORAL REFORMERS

THE MORAL REFORMERS

THERE was no disguising the defeat. Victory was to Prout, but they grudged it not. If he had broken the rules of the game by calling in the Head, they had had a good run for their money.

The Reverend John sought the earliest opportunity of talking things over. Members of a bachelor Common-room, of a school where masters' studies are designedly dotted among studies and form-rooms, can, if they choose, see a great deal of their charges. Number Five had spent some cautious years in testing the Reverend John. He was emphatically a gentleman. He knocked at a study door before entering; he comported himself as a visitor and not a strayed lictor; he never prosed, and he never carried over into official life the confidences of idle hours. Prout was ever an unmitigated nuisance; King came solely as an avenger of blood; even little Hartopp, talking natural history, seldom forgot his office; but the Reverend John was a guest desired and beloved by Number Five.

Behold him, then, in their only arm-chair, a bent brier between his teeth, chin down in three folds on his clerical collar, and blowing like an amiable whale, while Number Five discoursed of life as it appeared to them, and specially of that last interview with the Head — in the matter of usury.

"One licking once a week would do you an immense amount of good," he said, twinkling and shaking all over; 'and, as you say, you were entirely in the right."

"Ra-ather, Padre! We could have proved it if he'd let us talk," said Stalky; "but he didn't. The Head's a downy bird."

"He understands you perfectly. Ho! ho! Well, you worked hard enough for it."

"But he's awfully fair. He doesn't lick a chap in the morning an' preach at him in the afternoon," said Beetle.

"He can't; he ain't in Orders, thank Goodness," said McTurk. Number Five held the very strongest views on clerical head-masters, and were ever ready to meet their pastor in argument.

"Almost all other schools have clerical Heads," said the Reverend John, gently.

"It isn't fair on the chaps," Stalky replied. "Makes 'em sulky. Of course it's different with *you*, sir. You belong to the school — same as we do. I mean ordinary clergymen."

"Well, I am a most ordinary clergyman; and Mr. Hartopp's in Orders, too."

"Ye-es, but he took 'em after he came to the Coll. We saw him go up for his exam. That's all right," said Beetle. "But just think if the Head went and got ordained!"

"What would happen, Beetle?"

"Oh, the Coll 'ud go to pieces in a year, sir. There's no doubt o' that."

"How d'you know?" The Reverend John was smiling.

"We've been here nearly six years now. There are precious few things about the Coll we don't know," Stalky replied. "Why, even you came the term after I did, sir. I remember your asking our names in form your first lesson. Mr. King, Mr. Prout, and the Head, of course, are the only masters senior to us — in that way."

"Yes, we've changed a good deal — in Common-room."

"Huh!" said Beetle, with a grunt. "They came here, an' they went away to get married. Jolly good riddance, too!"

"Doesn't our Beetle hold with matrimony?"

"No, Padre; don't make fun of me. I've met chaps in the holidays who 've got married housemasters. It's perfectly awful! They have babies and teething and measles and all that sort of thing right bung *in* the school; and the masters' wives

give tea-parties — tea-parties, Padre! — and ask the chaps to breakfast."

"That don't matter so much," said Stalky. "But the house-masters let their houses alone, and they leave everything to the prefects. Why, in one school, a chap told me, there were big baize doors and a passage about a mile long between the house and the master's house. They could do just what they pleased."

"Satan rebuking sin with a vengeance."

"Oh, larks are right enough; but you know what we mean, Padre. After a bit it gets worse an' worse. Then there's a big bust-up and a row that gets into the papers, and a lot of chaps are expelled, you know."

"Always the wrong 'uns; don't forget that. Have a cup of cocoa, Padre?" said McTurk, with the kettle.

"No, thanks; I'm smoking. Always the wrong 'uns? Pro-ceed, my Stalky."

"And then" — Stalky warmed to the work — "everybody says, 'Who'd ha' thought it? Shockin' boys! Wicked little kids!' It all comes of havin' married house-masters, *I* think."

"A Daniel come to judgment."

"But it does," McTurk interrupted. "I've met chaps in the holidays, an' they've told me the same thing. It looks awfully pretty for one's people to see — a nice separate house with a nice lady in

charge, an' all that. But it isn't. It takes the house-masters off their work, and it gives the prefects a heap too much power, an' — an'— it rots up everything. You see, it isn't as if we were just an ordinary school. We take crammers' rejections as well as good little boys like Stalky. We've got to do that to make our name, of course, and we get 'em into Sandhurst somehow or other, don't we?"

"True, O Turk. Like a book thou talkest, Turkey."

"And so we want rather different masters, don't you think so, to other places? We aren't like the rest of the schools."

"It leads to all sorts of bullyin', too, a chap told me," said Beetle.

"Well, you *do* need most of a single man's time, I must say." The Reverend John considered his hosts critically. "But do you never feel that the world — the Common-room — is too much with you sometimes?"

"Not exactly — in summer, anyhow." Stalky's eye roved contentedly to the window. "Our bounds are pretty big, too, and they leave us to ourselves a good deal."

"For example, here am I sitting in your study, very much in your way, eh?"

"Indeed you aren't, Padre. Sit down. Don't go, sir. You know we're glad whenever you come."

There was no doubting the sincerity of the

voices. The Reverend John flushed a little with pleasure and refilled his brier.

"And we generally know where the Common-room are," said Beetle, triumphantly. "Didn't you come through our lower dormitories last night after ten, sir?"

"I went to smoke a pipe with your house-master. No, I didn't give him any impressions. I took a short cut through your dormitories."

"I sniffed a whiff of 'baccy, this mornin'. Yours is stronger than Mr. Prout's. *I* knew," said Beetle, wagging his head.

"Good heavens!" said the Reverend John, absently. It was some years before Beetle perceived that this was rather a tribute to innocence than observation. The long, light, blindless dormitories, devoid of inner doors, were crossed at all hours of the night by masters visiting one another; for bachelors sit up later than married folk. Beetle had never dreamed that there might be a purpose in this steady policing.

"Talking about bullying," the Reverend John resumed, "you all caught it pretty hot when you were fags, didn't you?"

"Well, we must have been rather awful little beasts," said Beetle, looking serenely over the gulf between eleven and sixteen. "My Hat, what bullies they were then — Fairburn, 'Gobby' Maunsell, and all that gang!"

"'Member when 'Gobby' called us the Three Blind Mice, and we had to get up on the lockers and sing while he buzzed ink-pots at us?" said Stalky. "They *were* bullies if you like!"

"But there isn't any of it now," said McTurk, soothingly.

"That's where you make a mistake. We're all inclined to say that everything is all right as long as we aren't ourselves hurt. I sometimes wonder if it is extinct — bullying."

"Fags bully each other horrid; but the upper forms are supposed to be swottin' for exams. They've got something else to think about," said Beetle.

"Why? What do you think?" Stalky was watching the chaplain's face.

"I have my doubts." Then, explosively, "On my word, for three moderately intelligent boys you aren't very observant. I suppose you were too busy making things warm for your house-master to see what lay under your noses when you were in the form-rooms last week?"

"What, sir? I — I swear we didn't see anything," said Beetle.

"Then I'd advise you to look. When a little chap is whimpering in a corner, and wears his clothes like rags, and never does any work, and is notoriously the dirtiest little 'corridor-caution' in the Coll, something's wrong somewhere."

"That's Clewer," said McTurk, under his breath.

"Yes, Clewer. He comes to me for his French. It's his first term, and he's almost as complete a wreck as you were, Beetle. He's not naturally clever, but he has been hammered till he's nearly an idiot."

"Oh, no. They sham silly to get off more lickings," said Beetle. "*I* know that."

"I've never actually seen him knocked about," said the Reverend John.

"The genuine article don't do that in public," said Beetle. "Fairburn never touched me when any one was looking on."

"You needn't swagger about it, Beetle," said McTurk. "We all caught it in our time."

"But I got it worse than any one," said Beetle. "If you want an authority on bullyin', Padre, come to me. Corkscrews — brush-drill — keys — head-knucklin' — arm-twistin' — rockin' — Ag Ags — and all the rest of it."

"Yes. I do want you as an authority, or rather I want your authority to stop it — all of you."

"What about Abana and Pharpar, Padre — Harrison and Craye? They are Mr. Prout's pets," said McTurk, a little bitterly. "*We* aren't even sub-prefects."

"I've considered that, but on the other hand, since most bullying is mere thoughtlessness —"

"Not one little bit of it, Padre," said McTurk. "Bullies like bullyin'. They mean it. They think it up in lesson and practise it in the quarters."

"Never mind. If the thing goes up to the prefects it may make another house-row. You've had one already. Don't laugh. Listen to me. I ask you — my own Tenth Legion — to take the thing up quietly. I want little Clewer made to look fairly clean and decent — "

"Blowed if *I* wash him!" whispered Stalky.

"— Decent and self-respecting. As for the other boy, whoever he is, you can use your influence" — a purely secular light flickered in the chaplain's eye — "in any way you please to — to dissuade him. That's all. I'll leave it to you. Good night, *mes enfants*."

* * * * * * * * * *

"Well, what are we goin' to do?" Number Five stared at each other.

"Young Clewer would give his eyes for a place to be quiet in. *I* know that," said Beetle. "If we made him a study-fag, eh?"

"No!" said McTurk, firmly. "He's a dirty little brute, and he'd mess up everything. Besides, we ain't goin' to have any beastly Erickin'. D'you want to walk about with your arm round his neck?"

"He'd clean out the jam-pots, anyhow; an' the burnt-porridge saucepan — it's filthy now."

"Not good enough," said Stalky, bringing up both heels with a crash on the table. "If we find the merry jester who's been bullyin' him an' make him happy, that'll be all right. Why didn't we spot him when we were in the form-rooms, though?"

"Maybe a lot of fags have made a dead set at Clewer. They do that sometimes."

"Then we'll have to kick the whole of the lower school in our house — on spec. Come on," said McTurk.

"Keep your hair on! We mustn't make a fuss about the biznai. Whoever it is, he's kept quiet or we'd have seen him," said Stalky. "We'll walk round and sniff about till we're sure."

They drew the house form-rooms, accounting for every junior and senior against whom they had suspicions; investigated, at Beetle's suggestion, the lavatories and box-rooms, but without result. Everybody seemed to be present save Clewer.

"Rum!" said Stalky, pausing outside a study door. "Golly!"

A thin piping mixed with tears came muffled through the panels.

"*As beautiful Kitty one morning was tripping* —"

"Louder, you young devil, or I'll buzz a book at you!"

"*With a pitcher of milk* — Oh, Campbell, *please* don't! *To the fair of* —"

A book crashed on something soft, and squeals arose.

"Well, I never thought it was a study-chap, anyhow. That accounts for our not spotting him," said Beetle. "Sefton and Campbell are rather hefty chaps to tackle. Besides, one can't go into their study like a form-room."

"What swine!" McTurk listened. "Where's the fun of it? I suppose Clewer's faggin' for them."

"They aren't prefects. That's one good job," said Stalky, with his war-grin. "Sefton and Campbell! Um! Campbell and Sefton! Ah! One of 'em's a crammer's pup."

The two were precocious hairy youths between seventeen and eighteen, sent to the school in despair by parents who hoped that six months' steady cram might, perhaps, jockey them into Sandhurst. Nominally they were in Mr. Prout's house; actually they were under the Head's eye; and since he was very careful never to promote strange new boys to prefectships, they considered they had a grievance against the school. Sefton had spent three months with a London crammer, and the tale of his adventures there lost nothing in the telling. Campbell, who had a fine taste in clothes and a fluent vocabulary, followed his lead in looking down loftily on the rest of the world. This was only their second term, and the school, used

to what it profanely called "crammers' pups," had treated them with rather galling reserve. But their whiskers — Sefton owned a real razor — and their moustaches were beyond question impressive.

"Shall we go in an' dissuade 'em?" McTurk asked. "I've never had much to do with 'em, but I'll bet my hat Campbell's a funk."

"No-o! That's *oratio directa*," said Stalky, shaking his head. "I like *oratio obliqua*. 'Sides, where'd our moral influence be then? Think o' that!"

"Rot! What are you goin' to do?" Beetle turned into Lower Number Nine form-room, next door to the study.

"Me?" The lights of war flickered over Stalky's face. "Oh, I want to jape with 'em. Shut up a bit!"

He drove his hands into his pockets and stared out of window at the sea, whistling between his teeth. Then a foot tapped the floor; one shoulder lifted; he wheeled, and began the short quick double-shuffle — the war-dance of Stalky in meditation. Thrice he crossed the empty form-room, with compressed lips and expanded nostrils, swaying to the quick-step. Then he halted before the dumb Beetle and softly knuckled his head, Beetle bowing to the strokes. McTurk nursed one knee and rocked to and fro. They could hear Clewer howling as though his heart would break.

"Beetle is the sacrifice," Stalky said at last. "I'm sorry for you, Beetle. 'Member Galton's 'Art of Travel' [one of the forms had been studying that pleasant work] an' the kid whose bleatin' excited the tiger?"

"Oh, curse!" said Beetle, uneasily. It was not his first season as a sacrifice. "Can't you get on without me?"

"'Fraid not, Beetle, dear. You've got to be bullied by Turkey an' me. The more you howl, o' course, the better it'll be. Turkey, go an' covet a stump and a box-rope from somewhere. We'll tie him up for a kill—*à la* Galton. 'Member when 'Molly' Fairburn made us cock-fight with our shoes off, an' tied up our knees?"

"But that hurt like sin."

"Course it did. What a clever chap you are, Beetle! Turkey'll knock you all over the place. 'Member we've had a big row all round, an' I've trapped you into doin' this. Lend us your wipe."

Beetle was trussed for cock-fighting; but, in addition to the transverse stump between elbow and knee, his knees were bound with a box-rope. In this posture, at a push from Stalky he rolled over sideways, covering himself with dust.

"Ruffle his hair, Turkey. Now you get down, too. 'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' You two are in such a sweatin' wax with me that

you only curse. 'Member that. I'll tickle you up with a stump. You'll have to blub, Beetle."

"Right O! I'll work up to it in half a shake," said Beetle.

"Now begin—and remember the bleatin' o' the kid."

"Shut up, you brutes! Let me up! You've nearly cut my knees off. Oh, you *are* beastly cads! *Do* shut up. 'Tisn't a joke!" Beetle's protest was, in tone, a work of art.

"Give it to him, Turkey! Kick him! Roll him over! Kill him! Don't funk, Beetle, you brute. Kick him again, Turkey."

"He's not blubbin' really. Roll up, Beetle, or I'll kick you into the fender," roared McTurk.

They made a hideous noise among them, and the bait allured their quarry.

"Hullo! What's the giddy jest?" Sefton and Campbell entered to find Beetle on his side, his head against the fender, weeping copiously, while McTurk prodded him in the back with his toes.

"It's only Beetle," Stalky explained. "He's shammin' hurt. I can't get Turkey to go for him properly."

Sefton promptly kicked both boys, and his face lighted. "All right, I'll attend to 'em. Get up an' cock-fight, you two. Give me the stump. I'll tickle 'em. Here's a giddy jest! Come on, Campbell. Let's cook 'em."

Then McTurk turned on Stalky and called him very evil names.

"You said you were goin' to cock-fight too, Stalky. Come on!"

"More ass you for believin' me, then!" shrieked Stalky.

"Have you chaps had a row?" said Campbell.

"Row?" said Stalky. "Huh! I'm only educatin' them. D'you know anythin' about cock-fighting, Seffy?"

"Do I know? Why, at Maclagan's, where I was crammin' in town, we used to cock-fight in his drawing-room, and little Maclagan daren't say anything. But we were just the same as men there, of course. Do I know? *I'll* show you."

"Can't I get up?" moaned Beetle, as Stalky sat on his shoulder.

"Don't jaw, you fat piffler. You're going to fight Seffy."

"He'll slay me!"

"Oh, lug 'em into our study," said Campbell. "It's nice an' quiet in there. I'll cock-fight Turkey. This is an improvement on young Clewer."

"Right O! I move it's shoes-off for them an' shoes-on for us," said Sefton, joyously, and the two were flung down on the study floor. Stalky rolled them behind an arm-chair.

"Now I'll tie you two up an' direct the bull-

fight. Golly, what wrists you have, Seffy! They're too thick for a wipe; got a box-rope?" said he.

"Lots in the corner," Sefton replied. "Hurry up! Stop blubbin', you brute, Beetle. We're goin' to have a giddy campaign. Losers have to sing for the winners — sing odes in honour of the conqueror. You call yourself a beastly poet, don't you, Beetle? I'll poet you." He wriggled into position by Campbell's side.

Swiftly and scientifically the stumps were thrust through the natural crooks, and the wrists tied with well-stretched box-ropes to an accompaniment of insults from McTurk, bound, betrayed, and voluble behind the chair.

Stalky set away Campbell and Sefton, and strode over to his allies, locking the door on the way.

"And that's all right," said he in a changed voice.

"What the devil — ?" Sefton began. Beetle's false tears had ceased; McTurk, smiling, was on his feet. Together they bound the knees and ankles of the enemy even more straitly.

Stalky took the arm-chair and contemplated the scene with his blandest smile. A man trussed for cock-fighting is, perhaps, the most helpless thing in the world.

"'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' Oh, you frabjous asses!" He lay back and laughed till he could no more. The victims took in the situation but slowly.

"We'll give you the finest lickin' you ever had in your young lives when we get up!" thundered Sefton from the floor. "You'll laugh the other side of your mouth before you've done. What the deuce d'you mean by this?"

"You'll see in two shakes," said McTurk. "Don't swear like that. What we want to know is, why you two hulkin' swine have been bullyin' Clewer?"

"It's none of your business."

"What did you bully Clewer for?" The question was repeated with maddening iteration by each in turn. They knew their work.

"Because we jolly well chose!" was the answer at last. "Let's get up." Even then they could not realise the game.

"Well, now we're goin' to bully you because we jolly well choose. We're goin' to be just as fair to you as you were to Clewer. He couldn't do anything against you. You can't do anything to us. Odd, ain't it?"

"Can't we? You wait an' see."

"Ah," said Beetle, reflectively, "that shows you've never been properly jested with. A public lickin' ain't in it with a gentle jape. Bet a bob you'll weep an' promise anything."

"Look here, young Beetle, we'll half kill you when we get up. I'll promise you that, at any rate."

"You're going to be half killed first, though. Did you give Clewer Head-knuckles?"

"Did you give Clewer Head-knuckles?" McTurk echoed. At the twentieth repetition — no boy can stand the torture of one unvarying query, which is the essence of bullying — came confession.

"We did, confound you!"

"Then you'll be knuckled"; and knuckled they were, according to ancient experience. Head-knuckling is no trifle; "Molly" Fairburn of the old days could not have done better.

"Did you give Clewer Brush-drill?"

This time the question was answered sooner, and Brush-drill was dealt out for the space of five minutes by Stalky's watch. They could not even writhe in their bonds. No brush is employed in Brush-drill.

"Did you give Clewer the Key?"

"No; we didn't. I swear we didn't!" from Campbell, rolling in agony.

"Then we'll give it to you, so you can see what it would be like if you had."

The torture of the Key — which has no key at all — hurts excessively. They endured several minutes of it, and their language necessitated the gag.

"Did you give Clewer Corkscrews?"

"Yes. Oh, curse your silly souls! Let us alone, you cads."

They were corkscrewed, and the torture of the Corkscrew — this has nothing to do with corkscrews — is keener than the torture of the Key.

The method and silence of the attacks was breaking their nerves. Between each new torture came the pitiless, dazing rain of questions, and when they did not answer to the point, Isabella-coloured handkerchiefs were thrust into their mouths.

"Now are those all the things you did to Clewer? Take out the gag, Turkey, and let 'em answer."

"Yes, I swear that was all. Oh, you're killing us, Stalky!" cried Campbell.

"Pre-cisely what Clewer said to you. I heard him. Now we're goin' to show you what real bullyin' is. What I don't like about you, Sefton, is, you come to the Coll with your stick-up collars an' patent-leather boots, an' you think you can teach us something about bullyin'. *Do* you think you can teach us anything about bullyin'? Take out the gag and let him answer."

"No!" — ferociously.

"He says no. Rock him to sleep. Campbell can watch."

It needs three boys and two boxing-gloves to rock a boy to sleep. Again the operation has nothing to do with its name. Sefton was "rocked"

till his eyes set in his head and he gasped and crowed for breath, sick and dizzy.

"My Aunt!" said Campbell, appalled, from his corner, and turned white.

"Put him away," said Stalky. "Bring on Campbell. Now this *is* bullyin'. Oh, I forgot! I say, Campbell, what did you bully Clewer for? Take out his gag and let him answer."

"I — I don't know. Oh, let me off! I swear I'll make it *pax*. Don't 'rock' me!"

"'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' He says he don't know. Set him up, Beetle. Give me the glove an' put in the gag."

In silence Campbell was "rocked" sixty-four times.

"I believe I'm goin' to die!" he gasped.

"He says he is goin' to die. Put him away. Now, Sefton! Oh, I forgot! Sefton, what did you bully Clewer for?"

The answer is unprintable; but it brought not the faintest flush to Stalky's downy cheek.

"Make him an Ag Ag, Turkey!"

And an Ag Ag was he made, forthwith. The hard-bought experience of nearly eighteen years was at his disposal, but he did not seem to appreciate it.

"He says we are sweeps. Put him away! Now, Campbell! Oh, I forgot! I say, Campbell, what did you bully Clewer for?"

Then came the tears — scalding tears; appeals for mercy and abject promises of peace. Let them cease the tortures and Campbell would never lift hand against them. The questions began again — to an accompaniment of small persuasions.

"You seem hurt, Campbell. Are you hurt?"

"Yes. Awfully!"

"He says he is hurt. Are you broke?"

"Yes, yes! I swear I am. Oh, stop!"

"He says he is broke. Are you humble?"

"Yes!"

"He says he is humble. Are you devilish humble?"

"Yes!"

"He says he is devilish humble. Will you bully Clewer any more?"

"No. No-ooh!"

"He says he won't bully Clewer. Or any one else?"

"No. I swear I won't."

"Or any one else. What about that lickin' you and Sefton were goin' to give us?"

"I won't! I won't! I swear I won't!"

"He says he won't lick us. Do you esteem yourself to know anything about bullyin'?"

"No, I don't!"

"He says he doesn't know anything about bullyin'. Haven't we taught you a lot?"

"Yes — yes!"

"He says we've taught him a lot. Aren't you grateful?"

"Yes!"

"He says he is grateful. Put him away. Oh, I forgot! I say, Campbell, what did you bully Clewer for?"

He wept anew; his nerves being raw. "Because I was a bully. I suppose that's what you want me to say?"

"He says he is a bully. Right he is. Put him in the corner. No more japes for Campbell. Now, Sefton!"

"You devils! You young devils!" This and much more as Sefton was punted across the carpet by skilful knees.

"'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' We're goin' to make you beautiful. Where does he keep his shaving things? [Campbell told.] Beetle, get some water. Turkey, make the lather. We're goin' to shave you, Seffy, so you'd better lie jolly still, or you'll get cut. I've never shaved any one before."

"Don't! Oh, don't! Please don't!"

"Gettin' polite, eh? I'm only goin' to take off one ducky little whisker—"

"I'll — I'll make it *pax*, if you don't. I swear I'll let you off your lickin' when I get up!"

"— *And* half that moustache we're so proud of. He says he'll let us off our lickin'. Isn't he kind?"

McTurk laughed into the nickel-plated shaving-cup, and settled Sefton's head between Stalky's vice-like knees.

"Hold on a shake," said Beetle, "you can't shave long hairs. You've got to cut all that moustache short first, an' then scrope him."

"Well, I'm not goin' to hunt about for scissors. Won't a match do? Chuck us the match-box. He *is* a hog, you know; we might as well singe him. Lie still!"

He lit a vesta, but checked his hand. "I only want to take off half, though."

"That's all right." Beetle waved the brush. "I'll lather up to the middle — see? and you can burn off the rest."

The thin-haired first moustache of youth fluffed off in flame to the lather-line in the centre of the lip, and Stalky rubbed away the burnt stumpage with his thumb. It was not a very gentle shave, but it abundantly accomplished its purpose.

"Now the whisker on the other side. Turn him over!" Between match and razor this, too, was removed. "Give him his shaving-glass. Take the gag out. I want to hear what he'll say."

But there were no words. Sefton gazed at the lopsided wreck in horror and despair. Two fat tears rolled down his cheek.

"Oh, I forgot! I say, Sefton, what did you bully Clewer for?"

"Leave me alone! Oh, you infernal bullies, leave me alone! Haven't I had enough?"

"He says we must leave him alone," said McTurk.

"He says we are bullies, an' we haven't even begun yet," said Beetle. "You're ungrateful, Seffy. Golly! You *do* look an atrocity and a half!"

"He says he has had enough," said Stalky. "He errs!"

"Well, to work, to work!" chanted McTurk, waving a stump. "Come on, my giddy Narcissus. Don't fall in love with your own reflection!"

"Oh, let him off," said Campbell from his corner; "he's blubbing, too."

Sefton cried like a twelve-year-old with pain, shame, wounded vanity, and utter helplessness

"You'll make it *pax*, Sefton, won't you? You can't stand up to those young devils —"

"Don't be rude, Campbell, de-ah," said McTurk, "or you'll catch it again!"

"You *are* devils, you know," said Campbell.

"What? for a little bullyin' — same as you've been givin' Clewer! How long have you been jestin' with him?" said Stalky. "All this term?"

"We didn't always knock him about, though!"

"You did when you could catch him," said Beetle, cross-legged on the floor, dropping a stump from time to time across Sefton's instep. "Don't I know it!"

"I — perhaps we did."

"And you went out of your way to catch him? Don't I know it! Because he was an awful little beast, eh? Don't I know it! Now, you see, *you're* awful beasts, and you're gettin' what he got — for bein' a beast. Just because we choose."

"We never really bullied him — like you've done us."

"Yah!" said Beetle. "They never really bully — 'Molly' Fairburn didn't. Only knock 'em about a little bit. That's what they say. Only kick their souls out of 'em, and they go and blub in the box-rooms. Shove their heads into the ulsters an' blub. Write home three times a day — yes, you brute, I've done that — askin' to be taken away. You've never been bullied properly, Campbell. I'm sorry you made *pax*."

"I'm not!" said Campbell, who was a humourist in a way. "Look out, you're slaying Sefton!"

In his excitement Beetle had used the stump unreflectingly, and Sefton was now shouting for mercy.

"An' you!" he cried, wheeling where he sat. "You've never been bullied, either. Where were you before you came here?"

"I — I had a tutor."

"Yah! You would. You never blubbed in your life. But you're blubbin' now, by gum Aren't you blubbin'?"

"Can't you see, you blind beast?" Sefton fell over sideways, tear-tracks furrowing the dried lather. Crack came the cricket-stump on the curved latter-end of him.

"Blind, am I," said Beetle, "and a beast? Shut up, Stalky. I'm goin' to jape a bit with our friend, *à la* 'Molly' Fairburn. *I* think I can see. Can't I see, Sefton?"

"The point is well taken," said McTurk, watching the stump at work. "You'd better say that he sees, Seffy"

"You do — you can! I swear you do!" yelled Sefton, for strong arguments were coercing him.

"Aren't my eyes lovely?" The stump rose and fell steadily throughout this catechism.

"Yes."

"A gentle hazel, aren't they?"

"Yes — oh, yes!"

"What a liar you are! They're sky-blue. Ain't they sky-blue?"

"Yes — oh, yes!"

"You don't know your mind from one minute to another. You must learn — you must learn."

"What a bait you're in!" said Stalky. "Keep your hair on, Beetle."

"I've had it done to me," said Beetle. "Now — about my being a beast."

"*Pax* — oh, *pax!*" cried Sefton; "make it *pax.*

I'll give up! Let me off! I'm broke! I can't stand it!"

"Ugh! Just when we were gettin' our hand in!" grunted McTurk. "They didn't let Clewer off, I'll swear."

"Confess — apologise — quick!" said Stalky.

From the floor Sefton made unconditional surrender, more abjectly even than Campbell. He would never touch any one again. He would go softly all the days of his life.

"We've got to take it, I suppose?" said Stalky. "All right, Sefton. You're broke? Very good. Shut up, Beetle! But before we let you up, you an' Campbell will kindly oblige us with 'Kitty of Coleraine'—*à la* Clewer."

"That's not fair," said Campbell; "we've surrendered."

"'Course you have. Now you're goin' to do what we tell you — same as Clewer would. If you hadn't surrendered you'd ha' been really bullied. Havin' surrendered — do you follow, Seffy? — you sing odes in honour of the conquerors. Hurry up!"

They dropped into chairs luxuriously. Campbell and Sefton looked at each other, and, neither taking comfort from that view, struck up "Kitty of Coleraine."

"Vile bad," said Stalky, as the miserable wailing ended. "If you hadn't surrendered it would

have been our painful duty to buzz books at you for singin' out o' tune. Now then."

He freed them from their bonds, but for several minutes they could not rise. Campbell was first on his feet, smiling uneasily. Sefton staggered to the table, buried his head in his arms, and shook with sobs. There was no shadow of fight in either — only amazement, distress, and shame.

"Ca-can't he shave clean before tea, please?" said Campbell. "It's ten minutes to bell."

Stalky shook his head. He meant to escort the half-shaved one to the meal.

McTurk yawned in his chair and Beetle mopped his face. They were all dripping with excitement and exertion.

"If I knew anything about it, I swear I'd give you a moral lecture," said Stalky, severely.

"Don't jaw; they've surrendered," said McTurk. "This moral suasion biznai takes it out of a chap."

"Don't you see how gentle we've been? We might have called Clewer in to look at you," said Stalky. "'The bleatin' of the tiger excites the kid.' But we didn't. We've only got to tell a few chaps in Coll about this and you'd be hooted all over the shop. Your life wouldn't be worth havin'. But we aren't goin' to do that, either. We're strictly moral suasers, Campbell; so, unless you or Seffy split about this, no one will."

"I swear you're a brick," said Campbell. "I suppose I was rather a brute to Clewer."

"It looked like it," said Stalky. "But I don't think Seffy need come into hall with cock-eye whiskers. Horrid bad for the fags if they saw him. He can shave. Ain't you grateful, Sefton?"

The head did not lift. Sefton was deeply asleep.

"That's rummy," said McTurk, as a snore mixed with a sob. "'Cheek, *I* think; or else he's shammin'."

"No, 'tisn't," said Beetle. "When 'Molly' Fairburn had attended to me for an hour or so I used to go bung off to sleep on a form sometimes. Poor devil! But he called me a beastly poet, though."

"Well, come on." Stalky lowered his voice. "Good-by, Campbell. 'Member, if you don't talk, nobody will."

There should have been a war-dance, but that all three were so utterly tired that they almost went to sleep above the tea-cups in their study, and slept till prep.

* * * * * * * * * *

"A most extraordinary letter. Are *all* parents incurably mad? What do you make of it?" said the Head, handing a closely written eight pages to the Reverend John.

"'The only son of his mother, and she a widow.' That is the least reasonable sort." The chaplain read with pursed lips.

"If half those charges are true he should be in the sick-house; whereas he is disgustingly well. Certainly he has shaved. I noticed that."

"Under compulsion, as his mother points out. How delicious! How salutary!"

"You haven't to answer her. It isn't often I don't know what has happened in the school; but this is beyond me."

"If you asked me I should say seek not to propitiate. When one is forced to take crammers' pups —"

"He was perfectly well at extra-tuition — with me — this morning," said the Head, absently. "Unusually well behaved, too."

"— they either educate the school, or the school, as in this case, educates them. I prefer our own methods," the chaplain concluded.

"You think it was that?" A lift of the Head's eyebrow.

"I'm sure of it! And nothing excuses his trying to give the College a bad name."

"That's the line I mean to take with him," the Head answered.

The Augurs winked.

* * * * * * * * * *

A few days later the Reverend John called on Number Five. "Why haven't we seen you before, Padre?" said they.

"I've been watching times and seasons and

events and men — and boys," he replied. "I am pleased with my Tenth Legion. I make them my compliments. Clewer was throwing ink-balls in form this morning, instead of doing his work. He is now doing fifty lines for — unheard-of audacity."

"You can't blame us, sir," said Beetle. "You told us to remove the — er — pressure. That's the worst of a fag."

"I've known boys five years his senior throw ink-balls, Beetle. To such an one have I given two hundred lines — not so long ago. And now I come to think of it, were those lines ever shown up?"

"Were they, Turkey?" said Beetle, unblushingly.

"Don't you think Clewer looks a little cleaner, Padre?" Stalky interrupted.

"We're no end of moral reformers," said McTurk.

"It was all Stalky, but it was a lark," said Beetle.

"I have noticed the moral reform in several quarters. Didn't I tell you you had more influence than any boys in the Coll if you cared to use it?"

"It's a trifle exhaustin' to use frequent — our kind of moral suasion. Besides, you see, it only makes Clewer cheeky."

"I wasn't thinking of Clewer; I was thinking of — the other people, Stalky."

"Oh, we didn't bother much about the other people," said McTurk. "Did we?"

"But *I* did — from the beginning."

"Then you knew, sir?"

A downward puff of smoke.

"Boys educate each other, they say, more than we can or dare. If I had used one half of the moral suasion you may or may not have employed —"

"With the best motives in the world. Don't forget our pious motives, Padre," said McTurk.

"— I suppose I should be now languishing in Bideford jail, shouldn't I? Well, to quote the Head, in a little business which we have agreed to forget, that strikes me as flagrant injustice. . . . What are you laughing at, you young sinners? Isn't it true? I will not stay to be shouted at. What I looked into this den of iniquity for was to find out if any one cared to come down for a bathe off the Ridge. But I see you won't."

"Won't we, though! Half a shake, Padre Sahib, till we get our towels, and *nous sommes avec vous!*"

A LITTLE PREP.

A LITTLE PREP.

THE Easter term was but a month old when Stettson major, a day-boy, contracted diphtheria, and the Head was very angry. He decreed a new and narrower set of bounds — the infection had been traced to an outlying farm-house — urged the prefects severely to lick all trespassers, and promised extra attentions from his own hand. There were no words bad enough for Stettson major, quarantined at his mother's house, who had lowered the school-average of health. This he said in the gymnasium after prayers. Then he wrote some two hundred letters to as many anxious parents and guardians, and bade the school carry on. The trouble did not spread, but, one night, a dog-cart drove to the Head's door, and in the morning the Head had gone, leaving all things in charge of Mr. King, senior house-master. The Head often ran up to town, where the school devoutly believed he bribed officials for early proofs of the Army Examination papers; but this absence was unusually prolonged.

"Downy old bird!" said Stalky to the allies,

one wet afternoon, in the study. "He must have gone on a bend an' been locked up, under a false name."

"What for?" Beetle entered joyously into the libel.

"Forty shillin's or a month for hackin' the chucker-out of the Pavvy on the shins. Bates always has a spree when he goes to town. Wish he was back, though. I'm about sick o' King's 'whips an' scorpions' an' lectures on public-school spirit — yah! — and scholarship!"

"'Crass an' materialised brutality of the middle-classes — readin' solely for marks. Not a scholar in the whole school,'" McTurk quoted, pensively boring holes in the mantelpiece with a hot poker.

"That's rather a sickly way of spending an afternoon. Stinks, too. Let's come out an' smoke. Here's a treat." Stalky held up a long Indian cheroot. "'Bagged it from my pater last holidays. I'm a bit shy of it, though; it's heftier than a pipe. We'll smoke it palaver-fashion. Hand it round, eh? Let's lie up behind the old harrow on the Monkey-farm Road."

"Out of bounds. Bounds beastly strict these days, too. Besides, we shall cat." Beetle sniffed the cheroot critically. "It's a regular Pomposo Stinkadore."

"You can; I sha'n't. What d'you say, Turkey?"

"Oh, may's well, I s'pose."

"Chuck on your cap, then. It's two to one. Beetle, out you come!"

They saw a group of boys by the notice-board in the corridor; little Foxy, the school-sergeant, among them.

"More bounds, I expect," said Stalky. "Hullo, Foxibus, who are you in mournin' for?" There was a broad band of crape round Foxy's arm.

"He was in my old regiment," said Foxy, jerking his head towards the notices, where a newspaper cutting was thumb-tacked between call-over lists.

"By gum!" quoth Stalky, uncovering as he read. "It's old Duncan — Fat-Sow Duncan — killed on duty at something or other Kotal. '*Rallyin' his men with conspicuous gallantry.*' He would, of course. '*The body was recovered.*' That's all right. They cut 'em up sometimes, don't they, Foxy?"

"Horrid," said the sergeant, briefly.

"Poor old Fat-Sow! I was a fag when he left. How many does that make to us, Foxy?"

"Mr. Duncan, he is the ninth. He come here when he was no bigger than little Grey tertius. My old regiment, too. Yiss, nine to us, Mr. Corkran, up to date."

The boys went out into the wet, walking swiftly.

"Wonder how it feels — to be shot and all

that," said Stalky, as they splashed down a lane. "Where did it happen, Beetle?"

"Oh, out in India somewhere. We're always rowin' there. But look here, Stalky, what *is* the good o' sittin' under a hedge an' cattin'? It's be-eastly cold. It's be-eastly wet, and we'll be collared as sure as a gun."

"Shut up! Did you ever know your Uncle Stalky get you into a mess yet?" Like many other leaders, Stalky did not dwell on past defeats.

They pushed through a dripping hedge, landed among water-logged clods, and sat down on a rust-coated harrow. The cheroot burned with sputterings of saltpetre. They smoked it gingerly, each passing to the other between closed fore-finger and thumb.

"Good job we hadn't one apiece, ain't it?" said Stalky, shivering through set teeth. To prove his words he immediately laid all before them, and they followed his example. . . .

"I told you," moaned Beetle, sweating clammy drops. "Oh, Stalky, you *are* a fool!"

"*Je cat, tu cat, il cat. Nous cattons!*" McTurk handed up his contribution and lay hopelessly on the cold iron.

"Something's wrong with the beastly thing. I say, Beetle, have you been droppin' ink on it?"

But Beetle was in no case to answer. Limp and empty, they sprawled across the harrow, the

rust marking their ulsters in red squares and the abandoned cheroot-end reeking under their very cold noses. Then — they had heard nothing — the Head himself stood before them — the Head who should have been in town bribing examiners — the Head fantastically attired in old tweeds and a deer-stalker!

"Ah," he said, fingering his moustache. "Very good. I might have guessed who it was. You will go back to the College and give my compliments to Mr. King and ask him to give you an extra-special licking. You will then do me five hundred lines. I shall be back to-morrow. Five hundred lines by five o'clock to-morrow. You are also gated for a week. This is not exactly the time for breaking bounds. *Extra*-special, please."

He disappeared over the hedge as lightly as he had come. There was a murmur of women's voices in the deep lane.

"Oh, you Prooshan brute!" said McTurk as the voices died away. "Stalky, it's all your silly fault."

"Kill him! Kill him!" gasped Beetle.

"I ca-an't. I'm going to cat again. . . . I don't mind that, but King'll gloat over us horrid. Extra-special, ooh!"

Stalky made no answer — not even a soft one. They went to College and received that for which

they had been sent. King enjoyed himself most thoroughly, for by virtue of their seniority the boys were exempt from his hand, save under special order. Luckily, he was no expert in the gentle art.

"'Strange, how desire doth outrun performance," said Beetle, irreverently, quoting from some Shakespeare play that they were cramming that term. They regained their study and settled down to the imposition.

"You're quite right, Beetle." Stalky spoke in silky and propitiating tones. "Now, if the Head had sent us up to a prefect, we'd have got something to remember!"

"Look here," McTurk began with cold venom, "we aren't goin' to row you about this business. because it's too bad for a row; but we want you to understand you're jolly well excommunicated, Stalky. You're a plain ass."

"How was I to know that the Head 'ud collar us? What was he doin' in those ghastly clothes, too?"

"Don't try to raise a side-issue," Beetle grunted severely.

"Well, it was all Stettson major's fault. If he hadn't gone an' got diphtheria 'twouldn't have happened. But don't you think it rather rummy — the Head droppin' on us that way?"

"Shut up! You're dead!" said Beetle. "We've

chopped your spurs off your beastly heels. We've cocked your shield upside down and — and I don't think you ought to be allowed to brew for a month."

"Oh, stop jawin' at me. I want —"

"Stop? Why — why, we're gated for a week." McTurk almost howled as the agony of the situation overcame him. "A lickin' from King, five hundred lines, *and* a gatin'. D'you expect us to kiss you, Stalky, you beast?"

"Drop rottin' for a minute. I want to find out about the Head bein' where he was."

"Well, you have. You found him quite well and fit. Found him makin' love to Stettson major's mother. That was her in the lane — I heard her. And *so* we were ordered a lickin' before a day-boy's mother. Bony old widow, too," said McTurk. "Anything else you'd like to find out?"

"I don't care. I swear I'll get even with him some day," Stalky growled.

"Looks like it," said McTurk. "Extra-special, week's gatin', and five hundred . . . and now you're goin' to row about it! Help scrag him, Beetle!" Stalky had thrown his Virgil at them.

The Head returned next day without explanation, to find the lines waiting for him and the school a little relaxed under Mr. King's viceroyalty. Mr. King had been talking at and round

and over the boys' heads, in a lofty and promiscuous style, of public-school spirit and the traditions of ancient seats; for he always improved an occasion. Beyond waking in two hundred and fifty young hearts a lively hatred of all other foundations, he accomplished little — so little, indeed, that when, two days after the Head's return, he chanced to come across Stalky & Co., gated but ever resourceful, playing marbles in the corridor, he said that he was not surprised — not in the least surprised. This was what he had expected from persons of their *morale*.

"But there isn't any rule against marbles, sir. Very interestin' game," said Beetle, his knees white with chalk and dust. Then he received two hundred lines for insolence, besides an order to go to the nearest prefect for judgment and slaughter.

This is what happened behind the closed doors of Flint's study, and Flint was then Head of the Games: —

"Oh, I say, Flint. King has sent me to you for playin' marbles in the corridor an' shoutin' 'alley tor' an' 'knuckle down.'"

"What does he suppose I have to do with that?" was the answer.

"Dunno. Well?" Beetle grinned wickedly. "What am I to tell him? He's rather wrathy about it."

"If the Head chooses to put a notice in the cor-

ridor forbiddin' marbles, I can do something; but I can't move on a house-master's report. He knows that as well as I do."

The sense of this oracle Beetle conveyed, all unsweetened, to King, who hastened to interview Flint.

Now Flint had been seven and a half years at the College, counting six months with a London crammer, from whose roof he had returned, homesick, to the Head for the final Army polish. There were four or five other seniors who had gone through much the same mill, not to mention boys, rejected by other establishments on account of a certain overwhelmingness, whom the Head had wrought into very fair shape. It was not a Sixth to be handled without gloves, as King found.

"Am I to understand it is your intention to allow board-school games under your study windows, Flint? If so, I can only say —" He said much, and Flint listened politely.

"Well, sir, if the Head sees fit to call a prefects' meeting we are bound to take the matter up. But the tradition of the school is that the prefects can't move in any matter affecting the whole school without the Head's direct order."

Much more was then delivered, both sides a little losing their temper.

After tea, at an informal gathering of prefects in his study, Flint related the adventure.

"He's been playin' for this for a week, and now he's got it. You know as well as I do that if he hadn't been gassing at us the way he has, that young devil Beetle wouldn't have dreamed of marbles."

"We know that," said Perowne, "but that isn't the question. On Flint's showin' King has called the prefects names enough to justify a first-class row. Crammers' rejections, ill-regulated hobble-de-hoys, wasn't it? Now it's impossible for prefects —"

"Rot," said Flint. "King's the best classical cram we've got; and 'tisn't fair to bother the Head with a row. He's up to his eyes with extra-tu. and Army work as it is. Besides, as I told King, we *aren't* a public school. We're a limited liability company payin' four per cent. My father's a shareholder, too."

"What's that got to do with it?" said Venner, a red-headed boy of nineteen.

"Well, it seems to me that we should be interferin' with ourselves. We've got to get into the Army or — get out, haven't we? King's hired by the Council to teach us. All the rest's flum-diddle. Can't you see?"

It might have been because he felt the air was a little thunderous that the Head took his after-dinner cheroot to Flint's study; but he so often began an evening in a prefect's room that nobody

suspected when he drifted in pensively, after the knocks that etiquette demanded.

"Prefects' meeting?" A cock of one wise eyebrow.

"Not exactly, sir; we're just talking things over. Won't you take the easy-chair?"

"Thanks. Luxurious infants, you are." He dropped into Flint's big half-couch and puffed for a while in silence. "Well, since you're all here, I may confess that I'm the mute with the bowstring."

The young faces grew serious. The phrase meant that certain of their number would be withdrawn from all further games for extra-tuition. It might also mean future success at Sandhurst; but it was present ruin for the First Fifteen.

"Yes, I've come for my pound of flesh. I ought to have had you out before the Exeter match; but it's our sacred duty to beat Exeter."

"Isn't the Old Boys' match sacred, too, sir?" said Perowne. The Old Boys' match was the event of the Easter term.

"We'll hope they aren't in training. Now for the list. First I want Flint. It's the Euclid that does it. You must work deductions with me. Perowne, extra mechanical drawing. Dawson goes to Mr. King for extra Latin, and Venner to me for German. Have I damaged the First Fifteen much?" He smiled sweetly.

"Ruined it, I'm afraid, sir," said Flint. "Can't you let us off till the end of the term?"

"Impossible. It will be a tight squeeze for Sandhurst this year."

"And all to be cut up by those vile Afghans, too," said Dawson. "Wouldn't think there'd be so much competition, would you?"

"Oh, that reminds me. Crandall is coming down with the Old Boys — I've asked twenty of them, but we sha'n't get more than a weak team. I don't know whether he'll be much use, though. He was rather knocked about, recovering poor old Duncan's body."

"Crandall major — the Gunner?" Perowne asked.

"No, the minor — 'Toffee' Crandall — in a native infantry regiment. He was almost before your time, Perowne."

"The papers didn't say anything about him. We read about Fat-Sow, of course. What's Crandall done, sir?"

"I've brought over an Indian paper that his mother sent me. It was rather a — hefty, I think you say — piece of work. Shall I read it?"

The Head knew how to read. When he had finished the quarter-column of close type they thanked him politely.

"Good for the old Coll!" said Perowne. "Pity

he wasn't in time to save Fat-Sow, though. That's nine to us, isn't it, in the last three years?"

"Yes. . . . And I took old Duncan off all games for extra-tu. five years ago this term," said the Head. "By the way, who do you hand over the Games to, Flint?"

"Haven't thought yet. Who'd you recommend, sir?"

"No, thank you. I've heard it casually hinted behind my back that the Prooshan Bates is a downy bird, but he isn't going to make himself responsible for a new Head of the Games. Settle it among yourselves. Good night."

"And that's the man," said Flint, when the door shut, "that you want to bother with a dame's school row."

"I was only pullin' your fat leg," Perowne returned hastily. "You're so easy to draw, Flint."

"Well, never mind that. The Head's knocked the First Fifteen to bits, and we've got to pick up the pieces, or the Old Boys will have a walk-over. Let's promote all the Second Fifteen and make Big Side play up. There's heaps of talent somewhere that we can polish up between now and the match."

The case was represented so urgently to the school that even Stalky and McTurk, who affected to despise football, played one Big-Side game seriously. They were forthwith promoted ere

their ardor had time to cool, and the dignity of their Caps demanded that they should keep some show of virtue. The match-team was worked at least four days out of seven, and the school saw hope ahead.

With the last week of the term the Old Boys began to arrive, and their welcome was nicely proportioned to their worth. Gentlemen cadets from Sandhurst and Woolwich, who had only left a year ago, but who carried enormous side, were greeted with a cheerful "Hullo! What's the Shop like?" from those who had shared their studies. Militia subalterns had more consideration, but it was understood they were not precisely of the true metal. Recreants who, failing for the Army, had gone into business or banks were received for old sake's sake, but in no way made too much of. But when the real subalterns, officers and gentlemen full-blown — who had been to the ends of the earth and back again and so carried no side — came on the scene strolling about with the Head, the school divided right and left in admiring silence. And when one laid hands on Flint, even upon the Head of the Games, crying, "Good Heavens! What do you mean by growing in this way? You were a beastly little fag when I left," visible haloes encircled Flint. They would walk to and fro in the corridor with the little red school-sergeant, telling news

of old regiments; they would burst into form-rooms sniffing the well-remembered smells of ink and whitewash; they would find nephews and cousins in the lower forms and present them with enormous wealth; or they would invade the gymnasium and make Foxy show off the new stock on the bars.

Chiefly, though, they talked with the Head, who was father-confessor and agent-general to them all; for what they shouted in their unthinking youth, they proved in their thoughtless manhood — to wit, that the Prooshan Bates was "a downy bird." Young blood who had stumbled into an entanglement with a pastry-cook's daughter at Plymouth; experience who had come into a small legacy but mistrusted lawyers; ambition halting at cross-roads, anxious to take the one that would lead him farthest; extravagance pursued by the money-lender; arrogance in the thick of a regimental row — each carried his trouble to the Head; and Chiron showed him, in language quite unfit for little boys, a quiet and safe way round, out, or under. So they overflowed his house, smoked his cigars, and drank his health as they had drunk it all the earth over when two or three of the old school had foregathered.

"Don't stop smoking for a minute," said the Head. "The more you're out of training the better for us. I've demoralised the First Fifteen with extra-tu."

"Ah, but we're a scratch lot. Have you told 'em we shall need a substitute even if Crandall can play?" said a Lieutenant of Engineers with a D. S. O. to his credit.

"He wrote me he'd play, so he can't have been much hurt. He's coming down to-morrow morning."

"Crandall minor that was, and brought off poor Duncan's body?" The Head nodded. "Where are you going to put him? We've turned you out of house and home already, Head Sahib." This was a Squadron Commander of Bengal Lancers, home on leave.

"I'm afraid he'll have to go up to his old dormitory. You know Old Boys can claim that privilege. Yes, I think leetle Crandall minor must bed down there once more."

"Bates Sahib" — a Gunner flung a heavy arm round the Head's neck — "you've got something up your sleeve. Confess! I know that twinkle."

"Can't you see, you cuckoo?" a Submarine Miner interrupted. "Crandall goes up to the dormitory as an object-lesson, for moral effect and so forth. Isn't that true, Head Sahib?"

"It is. You know too much, Purvis. I licked you for that in '79."

"You did, sir, and it's my private belief you chalked the cane."

"N-no. But I've a very straight eye. Perhaps that misled you."

That opened the flood-gates of fresh memories, and they all told tales out of school.

When Crandall minor that was — Lieutenant R. Crandall of an ordinary Indian regiment — arrived from Exeter on the morning of the match, he was cheered along the whole front of the College, for the prefects had repeated the sense of that which the Head had read them in Flint's study. When Prout's house understood that he would claim his Old Boy's right to a bed for one night, Beetle ran into King's house next door and executed a public "gloat" up and down the enemy's big form-room, departing in a haze of ink-pots.

"What d'you take any notice of these rotters for?" said Stalky, playing substitute for the Old Boys, magnificent in black jersey, white knickers, and black stockings. "I talked to *him* up in the dormitory when he was changin'. Pulled his sweater down for him. He's cut about all over the arms — horrid purply ones. He's goin' to tell us about it to-night. I asked him to when I was lacin' his boots."

"Well, you *have* got cheek," said Beetle, enviously.

"Slipped out before I thought. But he wasn't a bit angry. He's no end of a chap. I swear I'm goin' to play up like beans. Tell Turkey!"

The technique of that match belongs to a bygone age. Scrimmages were tight and enduring; hacking was direct and to the purpose; and around the scrimmage stood the school, crying, "Put down your heads and shove!" Towards the end everybody lost all sense of decency, and mothers of day-boys too close to the touch-line heard language not included in the bills. No one was actually carried off the field, but both sides felt happier when time was called, and Beetle helped Stalky and McTurk into their overcoats. The two had met in the many-legged heart of things, and, as Stalky said, had "done each other proud." As they swaggered woodenly behind the teams — substitutes do not rank as equals of hairy men — they passed a pony-carriage near the wall, and a husky voice cried, "Well played. Oh, played indeed!" It was Stettson major, white-cheeked and hollow-eyed, who had fought his way to the ground under escort of an impatient coachman.

"Hullo, Stettson," said Stalky, checking. "Is it safe to come near you yet?"

"Oh, yes. I'm all right. They wouldn't let me out before, but I had to come to the match. Your mouth looks pretty plummy."

"Turkey trod on it accidental-done-a-purpose. Well, I'm glad you're better, because we owe you something. You and your membranes got us into a sweet mess, young man."

"I heard of that," said the boy, giggling. "The Head told me."

"Dooce he did! When?"

"Oh, come on up to Coll. My shin'll stiffen if we stay jawin' here."

"Shut up, Turkey. I want to find out about this. Well?"

"He was stayin' at our house all the time I was ill."

"What for? Neglectin' the Coll that way? 'Thought he was in town."

"I was off my head, you know, and they said I kept on callin' for him."

"Cheek! You're only a day-boy."

"He came just the same, and he about saved my life. I was all bunged up one night — just goin' to croak, the doctor said — and they stuck a tube or somethin' in my throat, and the Head sucked out the stuff."

"Ugh! 'Shot if *I* would!"

"He ought to have got diphtheria himself, the doctor said. So he stayed on at our house instead of going back. I'd ha' croaked in another twenty minutes, the doctor says."

Here the coachman, being under orders, whipped up and nearly ran over the three.

"My Hat!" said Beetle. "That's pretty average heroic."

"Pretty average!" McTurk's knee in the small

of his back cannoned him into Stalky, who punted him back. "You ought to be hung!"

"And the Head ought to get the V. C.," said Stalky. "Why, he might have been dead *and* buried by now. But he wasn't. But he didn't. Ho! ho! He just nipped through the hedge like a lusty old blackbird. Extra-special, five hundred lines, an' gated for a week — all sereno!"

"I've read o' somethin' like that in a book," said Beetle. "Gummy, what a chap! Just think of it!"

"I'm thinking," said McTurk; and he delivered a wild Irish yell that made the team turn round.

"Shut your fat mouth," said Stalky, dancing with impatience. "Leave it to your Uncle Stalky, and he'll have the Head on toast. If you say a word, Beetle, till I give you leave, I swear I'll slay you. *Habeo Capitem crinibus minimis.* I've got him by the short hairs! Now look as if nothing had happened."

There was no need of guile. The school was too busy cheering the drawn match. It hung round the lavatories regardless of muddy boots while the team washed. It cheered Crandall minor whenever it caught sight of him, and it cheered more wildly than ever after prayers, because the Old Boys in evening dress, openly twirling their moustaches, attended, and instead of standing with the masters, ranged themselves along the wall im-

mediately before the prefects: and the Head called them over, too — majors, minors, and tertiuses, after their old names.

"Yes, it's all very fine," he said to his guests after dinner, "but the boys are getting a little out of hand. There will be trouble and sorrow later, I'm afraid. You'd better turn in early, Crandall. The dormitory will be sitting up for you. I don't know to what dizzy heights you may climb in your profession, but I do know you'll never get such absolute adoration as you're getting now."

"Confound the adoration. I want to finish my cigar, sir."

"It's all pure gold. Go where glory waits, Crandall — minor."

The setting of that apotheosis was a ten-bed attic dormitory, communicating through doorless openings with three others. The gas flickered over the raw pine washstands. There was an incessant whistling of draughts, and outside the naked windows the sea beat on the Pebbleridge.

"Same old bed — same old mattress, I believe," said Crandall, yawning. "Same old everything. Oh, but I'm lame! I'd no notion you chaps could play like this." He caressed a battered shin. "You've given us all something to remember you by."

It needed a few minutes to put them at their

ease; and, in some way they could not understand, they were more easy when Crandall turned round and said his prayers — a ceremony he had neglected for some years.

"Oh, I *am* sorry. I've forgotten to put out the gas."

"Please don't bother," said the prefect of the dormitory. "Worthington does that."

A nightgowned twelve-year-old, who had been waiting to show off, leaped from his bed to the bracket and back again, by way of a washstand.

"How d'you manage when he's asleep?" said Crandall, chuckling.

"Shove a cold cleek down his neck."

"It was a wet sponge when *I* was junior in the dormitory. . . . Hullo! What's happening?"

The darkness had filled with whispers, the sound of trailing rugs, bare feet on bare boards, protests, giggles, and threats such as:

"Be quiet, you ass! . . . *Squattez-vous* on the floor, then! . . . I swear you aren't going to sit on *my* bed! . . . Mind the tooth-glass," etc.

"Sta — Corkran said," the prefect began, his tone showing his sense of Stalky's insolence, "that perhaps you'd tell us about that business with Duncan's body."

"Yes — yes — yes," ran the keen whispers. "Tell us."

"There's nothing to tell. What on earth are you chaps hoppin' about in the cold for?"

"Never mind us," said the voices. "Tell about Fat-Sow."

So Crandall turned on his pillow and spoke to the generation he could not see.

"Well, about three months ago he was commanding a treasure-guard — a cart full of rupees to pay troops with — five thousand rupees in silver. He was comin' to a place called Fort Pearson, near Kalabagh."

"I was born there," squeaked a small fag. "It was called after my uncle."

"Shut up — you and your uncle! Never mind *him*, Crandall."

"Well, ne'er mind. The Afridis found out that this treasure was on the move, and they ambushed the whole show a couple of miles before he got to the fort, and cut up the escort. Duncan was wounded, and the escort hooked it. There weren't more than twenty Sepoys all told, and there were any amount of Afridis. As things turned out, I was in charge at Fort Pearson. Fact was, I'd heard the firing and was just going to see about it, when Duncan's men came up. So we all turned back together. They told me something about an officer, but I couldn't get the hang of things till I saw a chap under the wheels of the cart out in the open, propped up on one arm, blazing away with a

revolver. You see, the escort had abandoned the cart, and the Afridis — they're an awfully suspicious gang — thought the retreat was a trap — sort of draw, you know — and the cart was the bait. So they had left poor old Duncan alone. 'Minute they spotted how few *we* were, it was a race across the flat who should reach old Duncan first. We ran, and they ran, and we won, and after a little hackin' about they pulled off. I never knew it was one of us till I was right on top of him. There are heaps of Duncans in the service, and of course the name didn't remind me. He wasn't changed at all hardly. He'd been shot through the lungs, poor old man, and he was pretty thirsty. I gave him a drink and sat down beside him, and — funny thing, too — he said, 'Hullo, Toffee!' and I said, 'Hullo, Fat-Sow! hope you aren't hurt,' or something of the kind. But he died in a minute or two — never lifted his head off my knees. . . . I say, you chaps out there will get your death of cold. Better go to bed."

"All right. In a minute. But your cuts — your cuts. How did you get wounded?"

"That was when we were taking the body back to the Fort. They came on again, and there was a bit of a scrimmage."

"Did you kill any one?"

"Yes. Shouldn't wonder. Good night."

"Good night. Thank you, Crandall. Thanks awf'ly, Crandall. Good night."

The unseen crowds withdrew. His own dormitory rustled into bed and lay silent for a while.

"I say, Crandall"—Stalky's voice was tuned to a wholly foreign reverence.

"Well, what?"

"Suppose a chap found another chap croaking with diphtheria—all bunged up with it—and they stuck a tube in his throat and the chap sucked the stuff out, what would you say?"

"Um," said Crandall, reflectively. "I've only heard of one case, and that was a doctor. He did it for a woman."

"Oh, this wasn't a woman. It was just a boy."

"Makes it all the finer, then. It's about the bravest thing a man can do. Why?"

"Oh, I heard of a chap doin' it. That's all."

"Then he's a brave man."

"Would *you* funk it?"

"Ra-ather. Anybody would. Fancy dying of diphtheria in cold blood."

"Well—ah! Er! Look here!" The sentence ended in a grunt, for Stalky had leaped out of bed and with McTurk was sitting on the head of Beetle, who would have sprung the mine there and then.

Next day, which was the last of the term and given up to a few wholly unimportant examina-

tions, began with wrath and war. Mr. King had discovered that nearly all his house — it lay, as you know, next door but one to Prout's in the long range of buildings — had unlocked the doors between the dormitories and had gone in to listen to a story told by Crandall. He went to the Head, clamorous, injured, appealing; for he never approved of allowing so-called young men of the world to contaminate the morals of boyhood. Very good, said the Head. He would attend to it.

"Well, I'm awf'ly sorry," said Crandall, guiltily. "I don't think I told 'em anything they oughtn't to hear. Don't let them get into trouble on my account."

"Tck!" the Head answered, with the ghost of a wink. "It isn't the boys that make trouble; it's the masters. However, Prout and King don't approve of dormitory gatherings on this scale, and one must back up the house-masters. Moreover, it's hopeless to punish two houses only, so late in the term. We must be fair and include everybody. Let's see. They have a holiday task for the Easters, which, of course, none of them will ever look at. We will give the whole school, except prefects and study-boys, regular prep. to-night; and the Common-room will have to supply a master to take it. We must be fair to all."

"Prep. on the last night of the term. Whew!"

said Crandall, thinking of his own wild youth. "I fancy there will be larks."

The school, frolicking among packed trunks, whooping down the corridor, and "gloating" in form-rooms, received the news with amazement and rage. No school in the world did prep. on the last night of the term. This thing was monstrous, tyrannical, subversive of law, religion, and morality. They would go into the form-rooms, and they would take their degraded holiday task with them, but — here they smiled and speculated what manner of man the Common-room would send up against them. The lot fell on Mason, credulous and enthusiastic, who loved youth. No other master was anxious to take that "prep.," for the school lacked the steadying influence of tradition; and men accustomed to the ordered routine of ancient foundations found it occasionally insubordinate. The four long form-rooms, in which all below the rank of study-boys worked, received him with thunders of applause. Ere he had coughed twice they favoured him with a metrical summary of the marriage-laws of Great Britain, as recorded by the High Priest of the Israelites and commented on by the leader of the host. The lower forms reminded him that it was the last day, and that therefore he must "take it all in play." When he dashed off to rebuke them, the Lower Fourth and Upper Third began with one accord

to be sick, loudly and realistically. Mr. Mason tried, of all vain things under heaven, to argue with them, and a bold soul at a back desk bade him "take fifty lines for not 'olding up 'is 'and before speaking." As one who prided himself upon the precision of his English this cut Mason to the quick, and while he was trying to discover the offender, the Upper and Lower Second, three form-rooms away, turned out the gas and threw ink-pots. It was a pleasant and stimulating "prep." The study-boys and prefects heard the echoes of it far off, and the Common-room at dessert smiled.

Stalky waited, watch in hand, till half-past eight.

"If it goes on much longer the Head will come up," said he. "We'll tell the studies first, and then the form-rooms. Look sharp!"

He allowed no time for Beetle to be dramatic or McTurk to drawl. They poured into study after study, told their tale, and went again so soon as they saw they were understood, waiting for no comment; while the noise of that unholy "prep." grew and deepened. By the door of Flint's study they met Mason flying towards the corridor.

"He's gone to fetch the Head. Hurry up! Come on!"

They broke into Number Twelve form-room abreast and panting.

"The Head! The Head! The Head!" That

call stilled the tumult for a minute, and Stalky, leaping to a desk, shouted, "He went and sucked the diphtheria stuff out of Stettson major's throat when we thought he was in town. Stop rotting, you asses! Stettson major would have croaked if the Head hadn't done it. The Head might have died himself. Crandall says it's the bravest thing any livin' man can do, and I" — his voice cracked — "the Head don't know we know!"

McTurk and Beetle, jumping from desk to desk, drove the news home among the junior forms. There was a pause, and then, Mason behind him, the Head entered. It was in the established order of things that no boy should speak or move under his eye. He expected the hush of awe. He was received with cheers — steady, ceaseless cheering. Being a wise man, he went away, and the forms were silent and a little frightened.

"It's all right," said Stalky. "He can't do much. 'Tisn't as if you'd pulled the desks up like we did when old Carleton took prep. once. Keep it up! Hear 'em cheering in the studies!" He rocketed out with a yell, to find Flint and the prefects lifting the roof off the corridor.

When the Head of a limited liability company, paying four per cent., is cheered on his saintly way to prayers, not only by four form-rooms of boys waiting punishment, but by his trusted prefects,

he can either ask for an explanation or go his road with dignity, while the senior house-master glares like an excited cat and points out to a white and trembling mathematical master that certain methods — not his, thank God — usually produce certain results. Out of delicacy the Old Boys did not attend that call-over; and it was to the school drawn up in the gymnasium that the Head spoke icily.

"It is not often that I do not understand you; but I confess I do not to-night. Some of you, after your idiotic performances at prep., seem to think me a fit person to cheer. I am going to show you that I am not."

Crash — crash — crash — came the triple cheer that disproved it, and the Head glowered under the gas.

"That is enough. You will gain nothing. The little boys [the Lower School did not like that form of address] will do me three hundred lines apiece in the holidays. I shall take no further notice of them. The Upper School will do me one thousand lines apiece in the holidays, to be shown up the evening of the day they come back. And further—"

"Gummy, what a glutton!" Stalky whispered.

"For your behaviour towards Mr. Mason I intend to lick the whole of the Upper School to-morrow when I give you your journey-money.

This will include the three study-boys I found dancing on the form-room desks when I came up. Prefects will stay after call-over."

The school filed out in silence, but gathered in groups by the gymnasium door waiting what might befall.

"And now, Flint," said the Head, "will you be good enough to give me some explanation of your conduct?"

"Well, sir," said Flint, desperately, "if you save a chap's life at the risk of your own when he's dyin' of diphtheria, and the Coll finds it out, wha-what *can* you expect, sir?"

"Um, I see. Then that noise was not meant for — ah, cheek. I can connive at immorality, but I cannot stand impudence. However, it does not excuse their insolence to Mr. Mason. I'll forego the lines this once, remember; but the lickings hold good."

When this news was made public, the school, lost in wonder and admiration, gasped at the Head as he went to his house. Here was a man to be reverenced. On the rare occasions when he caned he did it very scientifically, and the execution of a hundred boys would be epic — immense.

"It's all right, Head Sahib. *We* know," said Crandall, as the Head slipped off his gown with a grunt in his smoking-room. "I found out just

now from our substitute. He was gettin' my opinion of your performance last night in the dormitory. I didn't know then that it was you he was talkin' about. Crafty young animal. Freckled chap with eyes — Corkran, I think his name is."

"Oh, I know *him*, thank you," said the Head, and reflectively. "Ye-es, I should have included them even if I hadn't seen 'em."

"If the old Coll weren't a little above themselves already, we'd chair you down the corridor," said the Engineer. "Oh, Bates, how could you? You might have caught it yourself, and where would we have been, then?"

"I always knew you were worth twenty of us any day. Now I'm sure of it," said the Squadron Commander, looking round for contradictions.

"He isn't fit to manage a school, though. Promise you'll never do it again, Bates Sahib. We — we can't go away comfy in our minds if you take these risks," said the Gunner.

"Bates Sahib, you aren't ever goin' to cane the whole Upper School, are you?" said Crandall.

"I can connive at immorality, as I said, but I can't stand impudence. Mason's lot is quite hard enough even when I back him. Besides, the men at the Golf-club heard them singing 'Aaron and Moses.' I shall have complaints about that from

the parents of day-boys. Decency must be pre served."

"We're coming to help," said all the guests.

* * * * * * * * * *

The Upper School were caned one after the other, their overcoats over their arms, the brakes waiting in the road below to take them to the station, their journey-money on the table. The Head began with Stalky, McTurk, and Beetle. He dealt faithfully by them.

"And here's your journey-money. Good-by, and pleasant holidays."

"Good-by. Thank you, sir. Good-by."

They shook hands.

"Desire don't outrun performance — *much* — this mornin'. We got the cream of it," said Stalky. "Now wait till a few chaps come out, and we'll really cheer him."

"Don't wait on our account, please," said Crandall, speaking for the Old Boys. "We're going to begin now."

It was very well so long as the cheering was confined to the corridor, but when it spread to the gymnasium, when the boys awaiting their turn cheered, the Head gave it up in despair, and the remnant flung themselves upon him to shake hands.

Then they seriously devoted themselves to

cheering till the brakes were hustled off the premises in dumb-show.

"Didn't I say I'd get even with him?" said Stalky on the box-seat, as they swung into the narrow Northam street. "Now all together—takin' time from your Uncle Stalky:

"It's a way we have in the Army,
It's a way we have in the Navy,
It's a way we have at the Public Schools,
Which nobody can deny!"

THE FLAG OF THEIR COUNTRY

THE FLAG OF THEIR COUNTRY

IT was winter and bitter cold of mornings. Consequently Stalky and Beetle — McTurk being of the offensive type that makes ornate toilet under all circumstances — drowsed till the last moment before turning out to call-over in the gas-lit gymnasium. It followed that they were often late; and since every unpunctuality earned them a black mark, and since three black marks a week meant defaulters' drill, equally it followed that they spent hours under the Sergeant's hand. Foxy drilled the defaulters with all the pomp of his old parade-ground.

"Don't think it's any pleasure to me" (his introduction never varied). "I'd much sooner be smoking a quiet pipe in my own quarters — but I see we 'ave the Old Brigade on our 'ands this afternoon. If I only 'ad you regular, Muster Corkran," said he, dressing the line.

"You've had me for nearly six weeks, you old glutton. Number off from the right!"

"Not *quite* so previous, please. I'm taking this drill. Left, half — turn! Slow — march." Twenty-

five sluggards, all old offenders, filed into the gymnasium. "Quietly provide yourselves with the requisite dumb-bells; returnin' quietly to your place. Number off from the right, in *a* low voice. Odd numbers one pace to the front. Even numbers stand fast. Now, leanin' forward from the 'ips, takin' your time from me."

The dumb-bells rose and fell, clashed and were returned as one. The boys were experts at the weary game.

"Ve-ry good. I shall be sorry when any of you resume your 'abits of punctuality. Quietly return dumb-bells. We will now try some simple drill."

"Ugh! I know that simple drill."

"It would be 'ighly to your discredit if you did not, Muster Corkran. *At* the same time, it is not so easy as it looks."

"Bet you a bob, I can drill as well as you, Foxy."

"We'll see later. Now try to imagine you ain't defaulters at all, but an 'arf company on parade, me bein' your commandin' officer. There's no call to laugh. If you're lucky, most of you will 'ave to take drills 'arf your life. Do me a little credit. You've been at it long enough, goodness knows."

They were formed into fours, marched, wheeled, and countermarched, the spell of ordered motion

strong on them. As Foxy said, they had been at it a long time.

The gymnasium door opened, revealing McTurk in charge of an old gentleman.

The Sergeant, leading a wheel, did not see. "Not so bad," he murmured. "Not 'arf so bad. The pivot-man of the wheel *honly* marks time, Muster Swayne. Now, Muster Corkran, you say you know the drill? Oblige me by takin' over the command and, reversin' my words step by step, relegate them to their previous formation."

"What's this? What's this?" cried the visitor, authoritatively.

"A — a little drill, sir," stammered Foxy, saying nothing of first causes.

"Excellent — excellent. I only wish there were more of it," he chirruped. "Don't let me interrupt. You were just going to hand over to some one, weren't you?" He sat down, breathing frostily in the chill air.

"I shall muck it. I know I shall," whispered Stalky, uneasily; and his discomfort was not lightened by a murmur from the rear rank that the old gentleman was General Collinson, a member of the College Board of Council.

"Eh — what?" said Foxy.

"Collinson, K. C. B.— He commanded the Pompadours — my father's old regiment," hissed Swayne major.

"Take your time," said the visitor. "*I* know how it feels. Your first drill — eh?"

"Yes, sir." He drew an unhappy breath. "'Tention. Dress!" The echo of his own voice restored his confidence.

The wheel was faced about, flung back, broken into fours, and restored to line without a falter. The official hour of punishment was long past, but no one thought of that. They were backing up Stalky — Stalky in deadly fear lest his voice should crack.

"He does you credit, Sergeant," was the visitor's comment. "A good drill — and good material to drill. Now, it's an extraordinary thing: I've been lunching with your head-master and he never told me you had a cadet-corps in the College."

"We 'aven't, sir. This is only a little drill," said the Sergeant.

"But aren't they keen on it?" said McTurk, speaking for the first time, with a twinkle in his deep-set eyes.

"Why aren't *you* in it, though, Willy?"

"Oh, I'm not punctual enough," said McTurk. "The Sergeant only takes the pick of us."

"Dismiss! Break off!" cried Foxy, fearing an explosion in the ranks. "I—I ought to have told you, sir, that — "

"But you should have a cadet-corps." The

General pursued his own line of thought. "You *shall* have a cadet-corps, too, if my recommendation in Council is any use. I don't know when I've been so pleased. Boys animated by a spirit like yours should set an example to the whole school."

"They do," said McTurk.

"Bless my soul! Can it be so late? I've kept my fly waiting half an hour. Well, I must run away. Nothing like seeing things for one's self. Which end of the buildings does one get out at? Will you show me, Willy? Who was that boy who took the drill?"

"Corkran, I think his name is."

"You ought to know him. That's the kind of boy you should cultivate. Evidently an unusual sort. A wonderful sight. Five-and-twenty boys, who, I dare say, would much sooner be playing cricket—" (it was the depth of winter; but grown people, especially those who have lived long in foreign parts, make these little errors, and McTurk did not correct him) — "drilling for the sheer love of it. A shame to waste so much good stuff; but I think I can carry my point."

"An' who's your friend with the white whiskers?" demanded Stalky, on McTurk's return to the study.

"General Collinson. He comes over to shoot with my father sometimes. Rather a decent old

bargee, too. He said I ought to cultivate your acquaintance, Stalky."

"Did he tip you?"

McTurk exhibited a blessed whole sovereign.

"Ah," said Stalky, annexing it, for he was treasurer. "We'll have a hefty brew. You'd pretty average cool cheek, Turkey, to jaw about our keenness an' punctuality."

"Didn't the old boy know we were defaulters?" said Beetle.

"Not him. He came down to lunch with the Head. I found him pokin' about the place on his own hook afterwards, an' I thought I'd show him the giddy drill. When I found he was so pleased, I wasn't goin' to damp his giddy ardour. He mightn't ha' given me the quid if I had."

"Wasn't old Foxy pleased? Did you see him get pink behind the ears?" said Beetle. "It was an awful score for him. Didn't we back him up beautifully? Let's go down to Keyte's and get some cocoa and sassingers."

They overtook Foxy, speeding down to retail the adventure to Keyte, who in his time had been Troop Sergeant-Major in a cavalry regiment, and now, a war-worn veteran, was local postmaster and confectioner.

"You owe us something," said Stalky, with meaning.

"I'm 'ighly grateful, Muster Corkran. I've 'ad to run against you pretty hard in the way o' business, now and then, but I *will* say that outside o' business — bounds an' smokin', an' such like — I don't wish to have a more trustworthy young gentleman to 'elp me out of a hole. The way you 'andled the drill was beautiful, though I say it. Now, if you come regular henceforth —"

"But he'll have to be late three times a week," said Beetle. "You can't expect a chap to do that — just to please you, Foxy."

"Ah, that's true. Still, if you could manage it — and you, Muster Beetle — it would give you a big start when the cadet-corps is formed. I expect the General will recommend it."

They raided Keyte's very much at their own sweet will, for the old man, who knew them well, was deep in talk with Foxy.

"I make what we've taken seven and six," Stalky called at last over the counter; "but you'd better count for yourself."

"No — no. I'd take your word any day, Muster Corkran.— In the Pompadours, was he, Sergeant? We lay with them once — at Umballa, I think it was."

"I don't know whether this ham-and-tongue tin is eighteenpence or one an' four."

"Say one an' fourpence, Muster Corkran. . . . Of course, Sergeant, if it was any use to give my

time, I'd be pleased to do it, but I'm too old. I'd like to see a drill again."

"Oh, come on, Stalky," cried McTurk. "He isn't listenin' to you. Chuck over the money."

"I want the quid changed, you ass. Keyte! Private Keyte! Corporal Keyte! Terroop-Sergeant-Major Keyte, will you give me change for a quid?"

"Yes — yes, of course. Seven an' six." He stared abstractedly, pushed the silver over, and melted away into the darkness of the back room.

"Now those two'll jaw about the Mutiny till tea-time," said Beetle.

"Old Keyte was at Sobraon," said Stalky. "Hear him talk about that sometimes! Beats Foxy hollow."

* * * * * * * * * * *

The Head's face, inscrutable as ever, was bent over a pile of letters.

"What do you think?" he said at last to the Reverend John Gillett.

"It's a good idea. There's no denying that — an estimable idea."

"We concede that much. Well?"

"I have my doubts about it — that's all. The more I know of boys the less do I profess myself capable of following their moods; but I own I shall be very much surprised if the scheme takes.

It — it isn't the temper of the school. We prepare for the Army."

"My business — in *this* matter — is to carry out the wishes of the Council. They demand a volunteer cadet-corps. A volunteer cadet-corps will be furnished. I have suggested, however, that we need not embark upon the expense of uniforms till we are drilled. General Collinson is sending us fifty lethal weapons — cut-down Sniders, he calls them — all carefully plugged."

"Yes, that is necessary in a school that uses loaded saloon-pistols to the extent we do." The Reverend John smiled.

"Therefore there will be no outlay except the Sergeant's time."

"But if he fails you will be blamed."

"Oh, assuredly. I shall post a notice in the corridor this afternoon, and — "

"I shall watch the result."

* * * * * * * * * *

"Kindly keep your 'ands off the new arm-rack."

Foxy wrestled with a turbulent crowd in the gymnasium. "Nor it won't do even a condemned Snider any good to be continual snappin' the lock, Mr. Swayne.— Yiss, the uniforms will come later, when we're more proficient; at present we will confine ourselves to drill. I am 'ere for the purpose of takin' the names o' those willin' to join.— Put down that Snider, Muster Hogan!"

"What are you goin' to do, Beetle?" said a voice.

"I've had all the drill *I* want, thank you."

"What! After all you've learned? Come on. Don't be a scab! They'll make you corporal in a week," cried Stalky.

"I'm not goin' up for the Army." Beetle touched his spectacles.

"Hold on a shake, Foxy," said Hogan. "Where are you goin' to drill us?"

"Here — in the Gym — till you are fit an' capable to be taken out on the road." The Sergeant threw a chest.

"For all the Northam cads to look at? Not good enough, Foxibus."

"Well, we won't make a point of it. You learn your drill first, an' later we'll see."

"Hullo," said Ansell of Macrea's, shouldering through the mob. "What's all this about a giddy cadet-corps?"

"It will save you a lot o' time at Sandhurst," the Sergeant replied promptly. "You'll be dismissed your drills early if you go up with a good groundin' before'and."

"Hm! 'Don't mind learnin' my drill, but I'm not goin' to ass about the country with a toy Snider. Perowne, what are you goin' to do? Hogan's joinin'."

"Don't know whether I've the time," said Perowne. "I've got no end of extra-tu. as it is."

"Well, call this extra-tu.," said Ansell. "'Twon't take us long to mug up the drill."

"Oh, that's right enough, but what about marchin' in public?" said Hogan, not foreseeing that three years later he should die in the Burmese sunlight outside Minhla Fort.

"Afraid the uniform won't suit your creamy complexion?" McTurk asked with a villainous sneer.

"Shut up, Turkey. You aren't goin' up for the Army."

"No, but I'm goin' to send a substitute. Hi! Morrell an' Wake! You two fags by the armrack, you've got to volunteer."

Blushing deeply — they had been too shy to apply before — the youngsters sidled towards the Sergeant.

"But I don't want the little chaps — not at first," said the Sergeant, disgustedly. "I want — I'd like some of the Old Brigade — the defaulters — to stiffen 'em a bit."

"Don't be ungrateful, Sergeant. They're nearly as big as you get 'em in the Army now." McTurk read the papers of those years and could be trusted for general information, which he used as he used his "tweaker." Yet he did not know that Wake minor would be a bimbashi of the Egyptian Army ere his thirtieth year.

Hogan, Swayne, Stalky, Perowne, and Ansell

were deep in consultation by the vaulting-horse, Stalky as usual laying down the law. The Sergeant watched them uneasily, knowing that many waited on their lead.

"Foxy don't like my recruits," said McTurk, in a pained tone, to Beetle. "You get him some."

Nothing loath, Beetle pinioned two more fags — each no taller than a carbine.

"Here you are, Foxy. Here's food for powder. Strike for your hearths an' homes, you young brutes — an' be jolly quick about it."

"Still he isn't happy," said McTurk.

> "For the way we have with our Army
> Is the way we have with our Navy."

Here Beetle joined in. They had found the poem in an old volume of "Punch," and it seemed to cover the situation:

> "An' both of 'em led to adversity,
> Which nobody can deny!"

"You be quiet, young gentlemen. If you can't 'elp — don't 'inder." Foxy's eye was still on the council by the horse. Carter, White, and Tyrrell, all boys of influence, had joined it. The rest fingered the rifles irresolutely.

"Half a shake," cried Stalky. "Can't we turn out those rotters before we get to work?"

"Certainly," said Foxy. "Any one wishful to join will stay 'ere. Those who do not so intend will go out, quietly closin' the door be'ind 'em."

Half a dozen of the earnest-minded rushed at them, and they had just time to escape into the corridor.

"Well, why don't you join?" Beetle asked, resettling his collar.

"Why didn't you?"

"What's the good? We aren't goin' up for the Army. Besides, I know the drill — all except the manual, of course. 'Wonder what they're doin' inside?"

"Makin' a treaty with Foxy. Didn't you hear Stalky say: 'That's what we'll do — an' if he don't like it he can lump it'? They'll use Foxy for a cram. Can't you see, you idiot? They're goin' up for Sandhurst or the Shop in less than a year. They'll learn their drill an' then they'll drop it like a shot. D'you suppose chaps with their amount of extra-tu. are takin' up volunteerin' for fun?"

"Well, I don't know. I thought of doin' a poem about it — rottin' 'em, you know — 'The Ballad of the Dog-shooters' — eh?"

"I don't think you can, because King'll be down on the corps like a cart-load o' bricks. He hasn't been consulted. He's sniffin' round the notice-board now. Let's lure him." They strolled

up carelessly towards the house-master — a most meek couple.

"How's this?" said King, with a start of feigned surprise. "Methought you would be learning to fight for your country."

"I think the company's full, sir," said McTurk.

"It's a great pity," sighed Beetle.

"Forty valiant defenders, have we, then? How noble! What devotion! I presume that it is possible that a desire to evade their normal responsibilities may be at the bottom of this zeal. Doubtless they will be accorded special privileges, like the Choir and the Natural History Society — one must not say Bug-hunters."

"Oh, I suppose so, sir," said McTurk, cheerily. "The Head hasn't said anything about it yet, but he will, of course."

"Oh, sure to."

"It is just possible, my Beetle," King wheeled on the last speaker, "that the house-masters — a necessary but somewhat neglected factor in our humble scheme of existence — may have a word to say on the matter. Life, for the young at least, is not all weapons and munitions of war. Education is incidentally one of our aims."

"What a consistent pig he is!" cooed McTurk, when they were out of ear-shot. "One always knows where to have him. Did you see how he

rose to that draw about the Head and special privileges?"

"Confound him, he might have had the decency to have backed the scheme. I could do such a lovely ballad, rottin' it; and now I'll have to be a giddy enthusiast. It don't bar our pulling Stalky's leg in the study, does it?"

"Oh, no; but in the Coll we must be pro-cadet-corps like anything. Can't you make up a giddy epigram, *à la* Catullus, about King objectin' to it?"

Beetle was at this noble task when Stalky returned all hot from his first drill.

"Hullo, my ramrod-bunger!" began McTurk. "Where's your dead dog? Is it Defence or Defiance?"

"Defiance," said Stalky, and leaped on him at that word. "Look here, Turkey, you mustn't rot the corps. We've arranged it beautifully. Foxy swears he won't take us out into the open till we say we want to go."

"*Dis*-gustin' exhibition of immature infants apin' the idiosyncrasies of their elders. Snff!"

"Have you drawn King, Beetle?" Stalky asked in a pause of the scuffle.

"Not exactly; but that's his genial style."

"Well, listen to your Uncle Stalky — who is a great man. Moreover and subsequently, Foxy's goin' to let us drill the corps in turn — *privatim et seriatim* — so that we'll all know how to handle a

half company anyhow. *Ergo*, an' *propter hoc*, when we go to the Shop we shall be dismissed drill early; thus, my beloved 'earers, combinin' education with wholesome amusement."

"I knew you'd make a sort of extra-tu. of it, you cold-blooded brute," said McTurk. "Don't you want to die for your giddy country?"

"Not if I can jolly well avoid it. So you mustn't rot the corps."

"We'd decided on that, years ago," said Beetle, scornfully. "King'll do the rottin'."

"Then you've got to rot King, my giddy poet. Make up a good catchy Limerick, and let the fags sing it."

"Look here, you stick to volunteerin', and don't jog the table."

"He won't have anything to take hold of," said Stalky, with dark significance.

They did not know what that meant till, a few days later, they proposed to watch the corps at drill. They found the gymnasium door locked and a fag on guard.

"This is sweet cheek," said McTurk, stooping.

"Mustn't look through the key-hole," said the sentry.

"I like that. Why, Wake, you little beast, I made you a volunteer."

"Can't help it. My orders are not to allow any one to look."

"S'pose we do?" said McTurk. "S'pose we jolly well slay you?"

"My orders are, I am to give the name of anybody who interfered with me on my post to the corps, an' they'd deal with him after drill, accordin' to martial law."

"What a brute Stalky is!" said Beetle. They never doubted for a moment who had devised that scheme.

"You esteem yourself a giddy centurion, don't you?" said Beetle, listening to the crash and rattle of grounded arms within.

"My orders are, not to talk except to explain my orders — they'll lick me if I do."

McTurk looked at Beetle. The two shook their heads and turned away.

"I swear Stalky *is* a great man," said Beetle after a long pause. "One consolation is that this sort of secret-society biznai will drive King wild."

It troubled many more than King, but the members of the corps were muter than oysters. Foxy, being bound by no vow, carried his woes to Keyte.

"I never come across such nonsense in my life. They've tiled the lodge, inner and outer guard all complete, and then they get to work, keen as mustard."

"But what's it all for?" asked the ex-Troop-Sergeant-Major.

"To learn their drill. You never saw anything like it. They begin after I've dismissed 'em — practisin' tricks; but out into the open they will *not* come — not for ever so. The 'ole thing is preposterous. If you're a cadet-corps, *I* say, be a cadet-corps, instead o' hidin' be'ind locked doors."

"And what do the authorities say about it?"

"That beats me again." The Sergeant spoke fretfully. "I go to the 'Ead an' 'e gives me no help. There's times when I think he's makin' fun o' me. I've never been a Volunteer-sergeant, thank God — but I've always had the consideration to pity 'em. I'm glad o' that."

"I'd like to see 'em," said Keyte. "From your statements, Sergeant, I can't get at what they're after."

"Don't ask me, Major! Ask that freckle-faced young Corkran. He's their generalissimo."

One does not refuse a warrior of Sobraon, or deny the only pastry-cook within bounds. So Keyte came, by invitation, leaning upon a stick, tremulous with old age, to sit in a corner and watch.

"They shape well. They shape uncommon well," he whispered between evolutions.

"Oh, *this* isn't what they're after. Wait till I dismiss 'em."

At the "break-off" the ranks stood fast. Perowne fell out, faced them, and, refreshing his

memory by glimpses at a red-bound, metal-clasped book, drilled them for ten minutes. (This is that Perowne who was shot in Equatorial Africa by his own men.)

Ansell followed him, and Hogan followed Ansell. All three were implicitly obeyed.

Then Stalky laid aside his Snider, and, drawing a long breath, favoured the company with a blast of withering invective.

"'Old 'ard, Muster Corkran. That ain't in any drill," cried Foxy.

"All right, Sergeant. You never know what you may have to say to your men.—For pity's sake, try to stand up without leanin' against each other, you blear-eyed, herrin'-gutted gutter-snipes. It's no pleasure to me to comb you out. That ought to have been done before you came here, you — you militia broom-stealers."

"The old touch — the old touch. *We* know it," said Keyte, wiping his rheumy eyes. "But where did he pick it up?"

"From his father — or his uncle. Don't ask me! Half of 'em must have been born within ear-shot o' the barracks." (Foxy was not far wrong in his guess.) "I've heard more back talk since this volunteerin' nonsense began than I've heard in a year in the service."

"There's a rear-rank man lookin' as though his belly were in the pawn-shop. Yes, you, Private

Ansell," and Stalky tongue-lashed the victim for three minutes, in gross and in detail.

"Hullo!" He returned to his normal tone. "First blood to me. You flushed, Ansell. You wriggled."

"Couldn't help flushing," was the answer. "Don't think I wriggled, though."

"Well, it's your turn now." Stalky resumed his place in the ranks.

"Lord, Lord! It's as good as a play," chuckled the attentive Keyte.

Ansell, too, had been blessed wirh relatives in the service, and slowly, in a lazy drawl — his style was more reflective than Stalky's — descended the abysmal depths of personality.

"Blood to me!" he shouted triumphantly. "You couldn't stand it, either." Stalky was a rich red, and his Snider shook visibly.

"I didn't think I would," he said, struggling for composure, "but after a bit I got in no end of a bait. Curious, ain't it?"

"Good for the temper," said the slow-moving Hogan, as they returned arms to the rack.

"Did you ever?" said Foxy, hopelessly, to Keyte.

"I don't know much about volunteers, but it's the rummiest show I ever saw. I can see what they're gettin' at, though. Lord! how often I've been told off an' dressed down in my day! They shape well — extremely well they shape."

"If I could get 'em out into the open, there's nothing I couldn't do with 'em, Major. Perhaps when the uniforms come down, they'll change their mind."

Indeed, it was time that the corps made some concession to the curiosity of the school. Thrice had the guard been maltreated and thrice had the corps dealt out martial law to the offender. The school raged. What was the use, they asked, of a cadet-corps which none might see? Mr. King congratulated them on their invisible defenders, and they could not parry his thrusts. Foxy was growing sullen and restive. A few of the corps expressed openly doubts as to the wisdom of their course; and the question of uniforms loomed on the near horizon. If these were issued, they would be forced to wear them.

But, as so often happens in this life, the matter was suddenly settled from without.

The Head had duly informed the Council that their recommendation had been acted upon, and that, so far as he could learn, the boys were drilling.

He said nothing of the terms on which they drilled. Naturally, General Collinson was delighted and told his friends. One of his friends rejoiced in a friend, a Member of Parliament — a zealous, an intelligent, and, above all, a patriotic person, anxious to do the most good in the short-

est possible time. But we cannot answer, alas! for the friends of our friends. If Collinson's friend had introduced him to the General, the latter would have taken his measure and saved much. But the friend merely spoke of his friend; and since no two people in the world see eye to eye, the picture conveyed to Collinson was inaccurate. Moreover, the man was an M. P., an impeccable Conservative, and the General had the English soldier's lurking respect for any member of the Court of Last Appeal. He was going down into the West country, to spread light in somebody's benighted constituency. Wouldn't it be a good idea if, armed with the General's recommendation, he, taking the admirable and newly established cadet-corps for his text, spoke a few words — "Just talked to the boys a little — eh? You know the kind of thing that would be acceptable; and he'd be the very man to do it. The sort of talk that boys understand, you know."

"They didn't talk to 'em much in my time," said the General, suspiciously.

"Ah! but times change — with the spread of education and so on. The boys of to-day are the men of to-morrow. An impression in youth is likely to be permanent. And in these times, you know, with the country going to the dogs?"

"You're quite right." The island was then entering on five years of Mr. Gladstone's rule; and

the General did not like what he had seen of it. He would certainly write to the Head, for it was beyond question that the boys of to-day made the men of to-morrow. That, if he might say so, was uncommonly well put.

In reply, the Head stated that he should be delighted to welcome Mr. Raymond Martin, M. P., of whom he had heard so much; to put him up for the night, and to allow him to address the school on any subject that he conceived would interest them. If Mr. Martin had not yet faced an audience of this particular class of British youth, the Head had no doubt that he would find it an interesting experience.

"And I don't think I am very far wrong in that last," he confided to the Reverend John. "Do you happen to know anything of one Raymond Martin?"

"I was at College with a man of that name," the chaplain replied. "He was without form and void, so far as I remember, but desperately earnest."

"He will address the Coll on 'Patriotism' next Saturday."

"If there is one thing our boys detest more than another it is having their Saturday evenings broken into. Patriotism has no chance beside 'brewing.'"

"Nor art either. D'you remember our 'Even-

ing with Shakespeare'?" The Head's eyes twinkled. "Or the humorous gentleman with the magic lantern?"

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"An' who the dooce is this Raymond Martin, M. P.?" demanded Beetle, when he read the notice of the lecture in the corridor. "Why do the brutes always turn up on a Saturday?"

"Ouh! Reomeo, Reomeo. Wherefore art thou Reomeo?" said McTurk over his shoulder, quoting the Shakespeare *artiste* of last term. "Well, he won't be as bad as *her*, I hope. Stalky, are you properly patriotic? Because if you ain't, this chap's goin' to make you."

"Hope he won't take up the whole of the evening. I suppose we've got to listen to him."

"Wouldn't miss him for the world," said McTurk. "A lot of chaps thought that Romeo-Romeo woman was a bore. *I* didn't. I liked her! 'Member when she began to hiccough in the middle of it? P'r'aps he'll hiccough. Whoever gets into the Gym first, bags seats for the other two."

* * * * * * * * * *

There was no nervousness, but a brisk and cheery affability about Mr. Raymond Martin, M. P., as he drove up, watched by many eyes, to the Head's house.

"Looks a bit of a bargee," was McTurk's comment. "Shouldn't be surprised if he was a Radi-

cal. He rowed the driver about the fare. I heard him."

"That was his giddy patriotism," Beetle explained.

After tea they joined the rush for seats, secured a private and invisible corner, and began to criticise. Every gas-jet was lit. On the little dais at the far end stood the Head's official desk, whence Mr. Martin would discourse, and a ring of chairs for the masters.

Entered then Foxy, with official port, and leaned something like a cloth rolled round a stick against the desk. No one in authority was yet present, so the school applauded, crying: "What's that, Foxy? What are you stealin' the gentleman's brolly for? — We don't birch here. We cane! Take away that bauble! — Number off from the right" — and so forth, till the entry of the Head and the masters ended all demonstrations.

"One good job — the Common-room hate this as much as we do. Watch King wrigglin' to get out of the draught."

"Where's the Raymondiferous Martin? Punctuality, my beloved 'earers, is the image o' war — "

"Shut up. Here's the giddy Dook. Golly, what a dewlap!" Mr. Martin, in evening dress, was undeniably throaty — a tall, generously designed, pink-and-white man. Still, Beetle need not have been coarse.

"Look at his back while he's talkin' to the Head. Vile bad form to turn your back on the audience! He's a Philistine — a Bopper — a Jebusite — an' a Hivite." McTurk leaned back and sniffed contemptuously.

In a few colourless words, the Head introduced the speaker and sat down amid applause. When Mr. Martin took the applause to himself, they naturally applauded more than ever. It was some time before he could begin. He had no knowledge of the school — its tradition or heritage. He did not know that the last census showed that eighty per cent. of the boys had been born abroad — in camp, cantonment, or upon the high seas; or that seventy-five per cent. were sons of officers in one or other of the services — Willoughbys, Paulets, De Castros, Maynes, Randalls, after their kind — looking to follow their fathers' profession. The Head might have told him this, and much more; but, after an hour-long dinner in his company, the Head decided to say nothing whatever. Mr. Raymond Martin seemed to know so much already.

He plunged into his speech with a long-drawn, rasping "Well, boys," that, though they were not conscious of it, set every young nerve ajar. He supposed they knew — hey? — what he had come down for? It was not often that he had an opportunity to talk to boys. He supposed that boys were very much the same kind of persons — some

people thought them rather funny persons — as they had been in his youth.

"This man," said McTurk, with conviction, "is *the* Gadarene Swine."

But they must remember that they would not always be boys. They would grow up into men, because the boys of to-day made the men of to-morrow, and upon the men of to-morrow the fair fame of their glorious native land depended.

"If this goes on, my beloved 'earers, it will be my painful duty to rot this bargee." Stalky drew a long breath through his nose.

"Can't do that," said McTurk. "He ain't chargin' anything for his Romeo."

And so they ought to think of the duties and responsibilities of the life that was opening before them. Life was not all — he enumerated a few games, and, that nothing might be lacking to the sweep and impact of his fall, added "marbles." "Yes, life was not," he said, "all marbles."

There was one tense gasp — among the juniors almost a shriek — of quivering horror. He was a heathen — an outcast — beyond the extremest pale of toleration — self-damned before all men. Stalky bowed his head in his hands. McTurk, with a bright and cheerful eye, drank in every word, and Beetle nodded solemn approval.

Some of them, doubtless, expected in a few years to have the honour of a commission from

the Queen, and to wear a sword. Now, he himself had had some experience of these duties, as a Major in a volunteer regiment, and he was glad to learn that they had established a volunteer corps in their midst. The establishment of such an establishment conduced to a proper and healthy spirit, which, if fostered, would be of great benefit to the land they loved and were so proud to belong to. Some of those now present expected, he had no doubt — some of them anxiously looked forward to leading their men against the bullets of England's foes; to confronting the stricken field in all the pride of their youthful manhood.

Now the reserve of a boy is tenfold deeper than the reserve of a maid, she being made for one end only by blind Nature, but man for several. With a large and healthy hand, he tore down these veils, and trampled them under the well-intentioned feet of eloquence. In a raucous voice, he cried aloud little matters, like the hope of Honour and the dream of Glory, that boys do not discuss even with their most intimate equals, cheerfully assuming that, till he spoke, they had never considered these possibilities. He pointed them to shining goals, with fingers which smudged out all radiance on all horizons. He profaned the most secret places of their souls with outcries and gesticulations. He bade them consider the deeds of their ancestors in such a fashion that they were flushed

to their tingling ears. Some of them — the rending voice cut a frozen stillness — might have had relatives who perished in defence of their country. They thought, not a few of them, of an old sword in a passage, or above a breakfast-room table, seen and fingered by stealth since they could walk. He adjured them to emulate those illustrious examples; and they looked all ways in their extreme discomfort.

Their years forbade them even to shape their thoughts clearly to themselves. They felt savagely that they were being outraged by a fat man who considered marbles a game.

And so he worked towards his peroration — which, by the way, he used later with overwhelming success at a meeting of electors — while they sat, flushed and uneasy, in sour disgust. After many, many words, he reached for the cloth-wrapped stick and thrust one hand in his bosom. This — this was the concrete symbol of their land — worthy of all honour and reverence! Let no boy look on this flag who did not purpose to worthily add to its imperishable lustre. He shook it before them — a large calico Union Jack, staring in all three colours, and waited for the thunder of applause that should crown his effort.

They looked in silence. They had certainly seen the thing before — down at the coast-guard station, or through a telescope, half-mast high

when a brig went ashore on Braunton Sands; above the roof of the Golf-club, and in Keyte's window, where a certain kind of striped sweetmeat bore it in paper on each box. But the College never displayed it; it was no part of the scheme of their lives; the Head had never alluded to it; their fathers had not declared it unto them. It was a matter shut up, sacred and apart. What, in the name of everything caddish, was he driving at, who waved that horror before their eyes? Happy thought! Perhaps he was drunk.

The Head saved the situation by rising swiftly to propose a vote of thanks, and at his first motion, the school clapped furiously, from a sense of relief.

"And I am sure," he concluded, the gaslight full on his face, "that you will all join me in a very hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Raymond Martin for the most enjoyable address he has given us."

To this day we shall never know the rights of the case. The Head vows that he did no such thing; or that, if he did, it must have been something in his eye; but those who were present are persuaded that he winked, once, openly and solemnly, after the word "enjoyable." Mr. Raymond Martin got his applause full tale. As he said, "Without vanity, I think my few words went to their hearts. I never knew boys could cheer like that."

He left as the prayer-bell rang, and the boys lined up against the wall. The flag lay still unrolled on the desk, Foxy regarding it with pride, for he had been touched to the quick by Mr. Martin's eloquence. The Head and the Common-room, standing back on the dais, could not see the glaring offence, but a prefect left the line, rolled it up swiftly, and as swiftly tossed it into a glove and foil locker.

Then, as though he had touched a spring, broke out the low murmur of content, changing to quick-volleyed hand-clapping.

They discussed the speech in the dormitories. There was not one dissentient voice. Mr. Raymond Martin, beyond question, was born in a gutter, and bred in a board-school, where they played marbles. He was further (I give the barest handful from great store) a Flopshus Cad, an Outrageous Stinker, a Jelly-bellied Flag-flapper (this was Stalky's contribution), and several other things which it is not seemly to put down.

The volunteer cadet-corps fell in next Monday, depressedly, with a face of shame. Even then, judicious silence might have turned the corner.

Said Foxy: "After a fine speech like what you 'eard night before last, you ought to take 'old of your drill with *re*-newed activity. I don't see how you can avoid comin' out an' marchin' in the open now."

"Can't we get out of it, then, Foxy?" Stalky's fine old silky tone should have warned him.

"No, not with his giving the flag so generously. He told me before he left this morning that there was no objection to the corps usin' it as their own. It's a handsome flag."

Stalky returned his rifle to the rack in dead silence, and fell out. His example was followed by Hogan and Ansell.

Perowne hesitated. "Look here, oughtn't we — ?" he began.

"I'll get it out of the locker in a minute," said the Sergeant, his back turned. "Then we can — "

"Come on!" shouted Stalky. "What the devil are you waiting for? Dismiss! Break off."

"Why — what the — where the — ?"

The rattle of Sniders, slammed into the rack, drowned his voice, as boy after boy fell out.

"I — I don't know that I sha'n't have to report this to the Head," he stammered.

"Report, then, and be damned to you," cried Stalky, white to the lips, and ran out.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Rummy thing!" said Beetle to McTurk. "I was in the study, doin' a simply lovely poem about the Jelly-bellied Flag-flapper, an' Stalky came in, an' I said 'Hullo!' an' he cursed me like a bargee, an' then he began to blub like anything. Shoved

his head on the table and howled. Hadn't we better do something?"

McTurk was troubled. "P'r'aps he's smashed himself up somehow."

They found him, with very bright eyes, whistling between his teeth.

"Did I take you in, Beetle? I thought I would. Wasn't it a good draw? Didn't you think I was blubbin'? Didn't I do it well? Oh, you fat old ass!" And he began to pull Beetle's ears and cheeks, in the fashion that was called "milking."

"I knew you were blubbin'," Beetle replied composedly. "Why aren't you at drill?"

"Drill! What drill?"

"Don't try to be a clever fool. Drill in the Gym."

"'Cause there isn't any. The volunteer cadet-corps is broke up — disbanded — dead — putrid — corrupt — stinkin'. An' if you look at me like that, Beetle, I'll slay you too. . . . Oh, yes, an' I'm goin' to be reported to the Head for swearin'."

THE LAST TERM

THE LAST TERM

IT was within a few days of the holidays, the term-end examinations, and, more important still, the last issue of the College paper which Beetle edited. He had been cajoled into that office by the blandishments of Stalky and McTurk and the extreme rigour of study law. Once installed, he discovered, as others have done before him, that his duty was to do the work while his friends criticised. Stalky christened it the "Swillingford Patriot," in pious memory of Sponge — and McTurk compared the output unfavourably with Ruskin and De Quincey. Only the Head took an interest in the publication, and his methods were peculiar. He gave Beetle the run of his brown-bound, tobacco-scented library; prohibiting nothing, recommending nothing. There Beetle found a fat arm-chair, a silver inkstand, and unlimited pens and paper. There were scores and scores of ancient dramatists; there were Hakluyt, his voyages; French translations of Muscovite authors called Pushkin and Lermontoff; little tales of a heady and bewildering nature, interspersed with

unusual songs — Peacock was that writer's name; there was Borrow's "Lavengro"; an odd theme, purporting to be a translation of something, called a "Rubáiyát," which the Head said was a poem not yet come to its own; there were hundreds of volumes of verse — Crashaw; Dryden; Alexander Smith; L. E. L.; Lydia Sigourney; Fletcher and a purple island; Donne; Marlowe's "Faust"; and — this made McTurk (to whom Beetle conveyed it) sheer drunk for three days — Ossian; "The Earthly Paradise"; "Atalanta in Calydon"; and Rossetti — to name only a few. Then the Head, drifting in under pretence of playing censor to the paper, would read here a verse and here another of these poets, opening up avenues. And, slow breathing, with half-shut eyes above his cigar, would he speak of great men living, and journals, long dead, founded in their riotous youth; of years when all the planets were little new-lit stars trying to find their places in the uncaring void, and he, the Head, knew them as young men know one another. So the regular work went to the dogs, Beetle being full of other matters and metres, hoarded in secret and only told to McTurk of an afternoon, on the sands, walking high and disposedly round the wreck of the Armada galleon, shouting and declaiming against the long-ridged seas.

Thanks in large part to their house-master's ex-

perienced distrust, the three for three consecutive terms had been passed over for promotion to the rank of prefect — an office that went by merit, and carried with it the honour of the ground-ash, and liberty, under restrictions, to use it.

"*But*," said Stalky, "come to think of it, we've done more giddy jesting with the Sixth since we've been passed over than any one else in the last seven years."

He touched his neck proudly. It was encircled by the stiffest of stick-up collars, which custom decreed could be worn only by the Sixth. And the Sixth saw those collars and said no word. "Pussy" Abanazar or Dick Four of a year ago would have seen them discarded in five minutes or . . . But the Sixth of that term was made up mostly of young but brilliantly clever boys, pets of the house-masters, too anxious for their dignity to care to come to open odds with the resourceful three. So they crammed their caps at the extreme back of their heads, instead of a trifle over one eye as the Fifth should, and rejoiced in patent-leather boots on week-days, and marvellous made-up ties on Sundays — no man rebuking. McTurk was going up for Cooper's Hill, and Stalky for Sandhurst, in the spring; and the Head had told them both that, unless they absolutely collapsed during the holidays, they were safe. As a trainer of colts, the Head seldom erred in an estimate of form.

He had taken Beetle aside that day and given him much good advice, not one word of which did Beetle remember when he dashed up to the study, white with excitement, and poured out the wondrous tale. It demanded a great belief.

"*You* begin on a hundred a year?" said McTurk, unsympathetically. "Rot!"

"*And* my passage out! It's all settled. The Head says he's been breaking me in for this for ever so long, and I never knew — I never knew. One don't begin with writing straight off, y'know. Begin by filling in telegrams and cutting things out o' papers with scissors.

"Oh, Scissors! What an ungodly mess you'll make of it," said Stalky. "But, anyhow, this will be your last term, too. Seven years, my dearly beloved 'earers — though not prefects."

"Not half bad years, either," said McTurk. "I shall be sorry to leave the old Coll; sha'n't you?"

They looked out over the sea creaming along the Pebbleridge in the clear winter light. "Wonder where we shall all be this time next year?" said Stalky, absently.

"This time five years," said McTurk.

"Oh," said Beetle, "my leavin's between ourselves. The Head hasn't told any one. I know he hasn't, because Prout grunted at me to-day that if I were more reasonable — yah! — I might

be a prefect next term. I suppose he's hard up for his prefects."

"Let's finish up with a row with the Sixth," suggested McTurk.

"Dirty little schoolboys!" said Stalky, who already saw himself a Sandhurst cadet. "What's the use?"

"Moral effect," quoth McTurk. "Leave an imperishable tradition, and all the rest of it."

"Better go into Bideford an' pay up our debts," said Stalky. "I've got three quid out of my father — *ad hoc*. Don't owe more than thirty bob, either. Cut along, Beetle, and ask the Head for leave. Say you want to correct the 'Swillingford Patriot.'"

"Well, I do," said Beetle. "It'll be my last issue, and I'd like it to look decent. I'll catch him before he goes to his lunch."

Ten minutes later they wheeled out in line, by grace released from five-o'clock call-over, and all the afternoon lay before them. So also unluckily did King, who never passed without witticisms. But brigades of Kings could not have ruffled Beetle that day.

"Aha! Enjoying the study of light literature, my friends," said he, rubbing his hands. "Common mathematics are not for such soaring minds as yours, are they?"

("One hundred a year," thought Beetle, smiling into vacancy.)

"Our open incompetence takes refuge in the flowery paths of inaccurate fiction. But a day of reckoning approaches, Beetle mine. I myself have prepared a few trifling foolish questions in Latin prose which can hardly be evaded even by your practised acts of deception. Ye-es, Latin prose. I think, if I may say so — but we shall see when the papers are set — 'Ulpian serves *your* need.' Aha! '*Elucescebat*, quoth our friend.' We shall see! We shall see!"

Still no sign from Beetle. He was on a steamer, his passage paid into the wide and wonderful world — a thousand leagues beyond Lundy Island.

King dropped him with a snarl.

"He doesn't know. He'll go on correctin' exercises an' jawin' an' showin' off before the little boys next term — and next." Beetle hurried after his companions up the steep path of the furze-clad hill behind the College.

They were throwing pebbles on the top of the gasometer, and the grimy gas-man in charge bade them desist. They watched him oil a turncock sunk in the ground between two furze-bushes.

"Cokey, what's that for?" said Stalky.

"To turn the gas on to the kitchens," said Cokey. "If so be I didn't turn her on, yeou young gen'elmen 'ud be larnin' your book by candlelight."

"Um!" said Stalky, and was silent for at least a minute.

"Hullo! Where are you chaps going?"

A bend of the lane brought them face to face with Tulke, senior prefect of King's house — a smallish, white-haired boy, of the type that must be promoted on account of its intellect, and ever afterwards appeals to the Head to support its authority when zeal has outrun discretion.

The three took no sort of notice. They were on lawful pass. Tulke repeated his question hotly, for he had suffered many slights from Number Five study, and fancied that he had at last caught them tripping.

"What the devil is that to you?" Stalky replied, with his sweetest smile.

"Look here, I'm not goin'— I'm not goin' to be sworn at by the Fifth!" sputtered Tulke.

"Then cut along and call a prefects' meeting," said McTurk, knowing Tulke's weakness.

The prefect became inarticulate with rage.

"Mustn't yell at the Fifth that way," said Stalky. "It's vile bad form."

"Cough it up, ducky!" McTurk said calmly.

"I — I want to know what you chaps are doing out of bounds?" This with an important flourish of his ground-ash.

"Ah," said Stalky. "Now we're gettin' at it. Why didn't you ask that before?"

"Well, I ask it now. What are you doing?"

"We're admiring you, Tulke," said Stalky.

"We think you're no end of a fine chap, don't we?"

"We do! We do!" A dog-cart with some girls in it swept round the corner, and Stalky promptly kneeled before Tulke in the attitude of prayer; so Tulke turned a colour.

"I've reason to believe —" he began.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" shouted Beetle, after the manner of Bideford's town crier, "Tulke has reason to believe! Three cheers for Tulke!"

They were given. "It's all our giddy admiration," said Stalky. "You know how we love you, Tulke. We love you so much we think you ought to go home and die. You're too good to live, Tulke."

"Yes," said McTurk. "*Do* oblige us by dyin'. Think how lovely you'd look stuffed!"

Tulke swept up the road with an unpleasant glare in his eye.

"That means a prefects' meeting — sure pop," said Stalky. "Honour of the Sixth involved, and all the rest of it. Tulke'll write notes all this afternoon, and Carson will call us up after tea. They daren't overlook that."

"Bet you a bob he follows us!" said McTurk. "He's King's pet, and it's scalps to both of 'em if we're caught out. We must be virtuous."

"Then I move we go to Mother Yeo's for a last gorge. We owe her about ten bob, and

Mary'll weep sore when she knows we're leaving," said Beetle.

"She gave me an awful wipe on the head last time — Mary," said Stalky.

"She does if you don't duck," said McTurk. "But she generally kisses one back. Let's try Mother Yeo."

They sought a little bottle-windowed half dairy, half restaurant, a dark-browed, two-hundred-year-old house, at the head of a narrow side street. They had patronised it from the days of their fagdom, and were very much friends at home.

"We've come to pay our debts, mother," said Stalky, sliding his arm round the fifty-six-inch waist of the mistress of the establishment. "To pay our debts and say good-bye — and — and we're awf'ly hungry."

"Aie!" said Mother Yeo, "makkin' love to me! I'm shaamed of 'ee."

"'Rackon us wouldn't du no such thing if Mary was here," said McTurk, lapsing into the broad North Devon that the boys used on their campaigns.

"Who'm takin' my name in vain?" The inner door opened, and Mary, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and apple-cheeked, entered with a bowl of cream in her hands. McTurk kissed her. Beetle followed suit, with exemplary calm. Both boys were promptly cuffed.

"Niver kiss the maid when 'ee can kiss the mistress," said Stalky, shamelessly winking at Mother Yeo, as he investigated a shelf of jams.

"Glad to see one of 'ee don't want his head slapped no more?" said Mary, invitingly, in that direction.

"Neu! Reckon I can get 'em give me," said Stalky, his back turned.

"Not by me — yeou little masterpiece!"

"Niver asked 'ee. There's maids to Northam. Yiss — an' Appledore." An unreproducible sniff, half contempt, half reminiscence, rounded the retort.

"Aie! Yeou won't niver come to no good end. Whutt be 'baout, smellin' the cream?"

"'Tees bad," said Stalky. "Zmell 'un."

Incautiously Mary did as she was bid.

"Bidevoor kiss."

"Niver amiss," said Stalky, taking it without injury.

"Yeou — yeou — yeou —" Mary began, bubbling with mirth.

"They'm better to Northam — more rich, laike — an' us gets them give back again," he said, while McTurk solemnly waltzed Mother Yeo out of breath, and Beetle told Mary the sad news, as they sat down to clotted cream, jam, and hot bread.

"Yiss. Yeou'll niver zee us no more, Mary. We'm goin' to be passons an' missioners."

"Steady the Buffs!" said McTurk, looking through the blind. "Tulke *has* followed us. He's comin' up the street now."

"They've niver put us out o' bounds," said Mother Yeo. "Bide yeou still, my little dearrs." She rolled to the inner room to make the score.

"Mary," said Stalky, suddenly, with tragic intensity. "Do 'ee lov' me, Mary?"

"Iss — fai! Talled 'ee zo since yeou was zo high!" the damsel replied.

"Zee 'un comin' up street, then?" Stalky pointed to the unconscious Tulke. "He've niver been kissed by no sort or manner o' maid in hees borned laife, Mary. Oh, 'tees shaamful!"

"Whutt's to do with me? 'Twill come to 'un in the way o' nature, I rackon." She nodded her head sagaciously. "Yeou niver want me to kiss 'un — sure-*ly*?"

"Give 'ee half-a-crown if 'ee will," said Stalky, exhibiting the coin.

Half-a-crown was much to Mary Yeo, and a jest was more; but —

"Yeou'm afraid," said McTurk, at the psychological moment.

"Aie!" Beetle echoed, knowing her weak point. "There's not a maid to Northam 'ud think twice. An' yeou such a fine maid, tu!"

McTurk planted one foot firmly against the inner door lest Mother Yeo should return inop-

portunely, for Mary's face was set. It was then that Tulke found his way blocked by a tall daughter of Devon — that county of easy kisses, the pleasantest under the sun. He dodged aside politely. She reflected a moment, and laid a vast hand upon his shoulder.

"Where be 'ee gwaine tu, my dearr?" said she.

Over the handkerchief he had crammed into his mouth Stalky could see the boy turn scarlet.

"Gie I a kiss! Don't they larn 'ee manners to College?"

Tulke gasped and wheeled. Solemnly and conscientiously Mary kissed him twice, and the luckless prefect fled.

She stepped into the shop, her eyes full of simple wonder.

"Kissed 'un?" said Stalky, handing over the money.

"Iss, fai! But, oh, my little body, *he'm* no Colleger. 'Zeemed tu minded to cry, laike."

"Well, we won't. You couldn't make us cry that way," said McTurk. "Try."

Whereupon Mary cuffed them all round.

As they went out with tingling ears, said Stalky generally, "Don't think there'll be much of a prefects' meeting."

"Won't there, just!" said Beetle. "Look here. If he kissed her — which is our tack — he

is a cynically immoral hog, and his conduct is blatant indecency. *Confer orationes Regis furiosissimi*, when he collared me readin' 'Don Juan.'"

"'Course he kissed her," said McTurk. "In the middle of the street. With his house-cap on!"

"Time, 3:57 P. M. Make a note o' that. What d'you mean, Beetle?" said Stalky.

"Well! He's a truthful little beast. He may say he was kissed."

"And then?"

"Why, then!" Beetle capered at the mere thought of it. "Don't you see? The corollary to the giddy proposition is that the Sixth can't protect 'emselves from outrages an' ravishin's. Want nurse-maids to look after 'em! We've only got to whisper that to the Coll. Jam for the Sixth! Jam for us! Either way it's jammy!"

"By gum!" said Stalky. "Our last term's endin' well. Now you cut along an' finish up your old rag, and Turkey and me will help. We'll go in the back way. No need to bother Randall."

"Don't play the giddy garden-goat, then?" Beetle knew what help meant, though he was by no means averse to showing his importance before his allies. The little loft behind Randall's printing-office was his own territory, where he saw himself already controlling the "Times." Here, under the guidance of the inky apprentice, he had

learned to find his way more or less circuitously about the case, and considered himself an expert compositor.

The school paper in its locked forms lay on a stone-topped table, a proof by the side; but not for worlds would Beetle have corrected from the mere proof. With a mallet and a pair of tweezers, he knocked out mysterious wedges of wood that released the form, picked a letter here and inserted a letter there, reading as he went along and stopping much to chuckle over his own contributions.

"You won't show off like that," said McTurk, "when you've got to do it for your living. Upside down and backwards, isn't it? Let's see if I can read it."

"Get out!" said Beetle. "Go and read those forms in the rack there, if you think you know so much."

"Forms in a rack! What's that? Don't be so beastly professional."

McTurk drew off with Stalky to prowl about the office. They left little unturned.

"Come here a shake, Beetle. What's this thing?" said Stalky, in a few minutes. "Looks familiar."

Said Beetle, after a glance: "It's King's Latin prose exam. paper. *In — In Verrem: actio prima.* What a lark!"

"Think o' the pure-souled, high-minded boys who'd give their eyes for a squint at it!" said McTurk.

"No, Willie dear," said Stalky; "that would be wrong and painful to our kind teachers. You wouldn't crib, Willie, would you?"

"Can't read the beastly stuff, anyhow," was the reply. "Besides, we're leavin' at the end o' the term, so it makes no difference to us."

"'Member what the Considerate Bloomer did to Spraggon's account of the Puffin'ton Hounds? We must sugar Mr. King's milk for him," said Stalky, all lighted from within by a devilish joy. "Let's see what Beetle can do with those forceps he's so proud of."

"Don't see how you can make Latin prose much more cock-eye than it is, but we'll try," said Beetle, transposing an *aliud* and *Asiae* from two sentences. "Let's see! We'll put that full-stop a little further on, and begin the sentence with the next capital. Hurrah! Here's three lines that can move up all in a lump."

"'One of those scientific rests for which this eminent huntsman is so justly celebrated.'" Stalky knew the Puffington run by heart.

"Hold on! Here's a *vol — voluntate quidnam* all by itself," said McTurk.

"I'll attend to her in a shake. *Quidnam* goes after *Dolabella*."

"Good old Dolabella," murmured Stalky. "Don't break him. Vile prose Cicero wrote, didn't he? He ought to be grateful for—"

"Hullo!" said McTurk, over another form. "What price a giddy ode? *Qui — quis* — oh, it's *Quis multa gracilis*, o' course."

"Bring it along. We've sugared the milk here," said Stalky, after a few minutes' zealous toil. "Never thrash your hounds unnecessarily."

"*Quis, munditiis?* I swear that's not bad," began Beetle, plying the tweezers. "Don't that interrogation look pretty? *Heu quoties fidem!* That sounds as if the chap were anxious an' excited. *Cui flavam religas in rosa* — Whose flavour is relegated to a rose. *Mutatosque Deos flebit in antro.*"

"Mute gods weepin' in a cave," suggested Stalky. "'Pon my Sam, Horace needs as much lookin' after as — Tulke."

They edited him faithfully till it was too dark to see.

* * * * * * * * * *

"'Aha! *Elucescebat*, quoth our friend.' Ulpian serves my need, does it? If King can make anything out of *that*, I'm a blue-eyed squatteroo," said Beetle, as they slid out of the loft window into a back alley of old acquaintance and started on a three-mile trot to the College. But the re-

vision of the classics had detained them too long. They halted, blown and breathless, in the furze at the back of the gasometer, the College lights twinkling below, ten minutes at least late for tea and lock-up.

"It's no good," puffed McTurk. "Bet a bob Foxy is waiting for defaulters under the lamp by the Fives Court. It's a nuisance, too, because the Head gave us long leave, and one doesn't like to break it."

"'Let me now from the bonded ware'ouse of my knowledge,'" began Stalky.

"Oh, rot! Don't Jorrock. Can we make a run for it?" snapped McTurk.

"'Bishops' boots Mr. Radcliffe also condemned, an' spoke 'ighly in favour of tops cleaned with champagne an' abricot jam.' Where's that thing Cokey was twiddlin' this afternoon?"

They heard him groping in the wet, and presently beheld a great miracle. The lights of the coast-guard cottages near the sea went out; the brilliantly illuminated windows of the Golf-club disappeared, and were followed by the frontages of the two hotels. Scattered villas dulled, twinkled, and vanished. Last of all, the College lights died also. They were left in the pitchy darkness of a windy winter's night.

"'Blister my kidneys. It *is* a frost. The dahlias are dead!'" said Stalky. "Bunk!"

They squattered through the dripping gorse as the College hummed like an angry hive and the dining-rooms chorussed, "Gas! gas! gas!" till they came to the edge of the sunk path that divided them from their study. Dropping that ha-ha like bullets, and rebounding like boys, they dashed to their study, in less than two minutes had changed into dry trousers and coat, and, ostentatiously slippered, joined the mob in the dining-hall, which resembled the storm-centre of a South American revolution.

"'Hellish dark and smells of cheese.'" Stalky elbowed his way into the press, howling lustily for gas. "Cokey must have gone for a walk. Foxy'll have to find him."

Prout, as the nearest house-master, was trying to restore order, for rude boys were flicking butter-pats across chaos, and McTurk had turned on the fags' tea-urn, so that many were parboiled and wept with an unfeigned dolour. The Fourth and Upper Third broke into the school song, the "*Vive la Compagnie*," to the accompaniment of drumming knife-handles; and the junior forms shrilled bat-like shrieks and raided one another's victuals. Two hundred and fifty boys in high condition, seeking for more light, are truly earnest inquirers.

When a most vile smell of gas told them that supplies had been renewed, Stalky, waistcoat unbuttoned, sat gorgedly over what might have

been his fourth cup of tea. "And that's all right," he said. "Hullo! 'Ere's Pomponius Ego!"

It was Carson, the head of the school, a simple, straight-minded soul, and a pillar of the First Fifteen, who crossed over from the prefects' table and in a husky, official voice invited the three to attend in his study in half an hour.

"Prefects' meetin'! Prefects' meetin'!" hissed the tables, and they imitated barbarically the actions and effects of the ground-ash.

"How are we goin' to jest with 'em?" said Stalky, turning half-face to Beetle. "It's your play this time!"

"Look here," was the answer, "all I want you to do is not to laugh. I'm goin' to take charge o' young Tulke's immorality — *à la* King — and it's goin' to be serious. If you can't help laughin' don't look at me, or I'll go pop."

"I see. All right," said Stalky.

McTurk's lank frame stiffened in every muscle and his eyelids dropped half over his eyes. That last was a war-signal.

The eight or nine seniors, their faces very set and sober, were ranged in chairs round Carson's severely Philistine study. Tulke was not popular among them, and a few who had had experience of Stalky and Company doubted that he might, perhaps, have made an ass of himself. But the

dignity of the Sixth was to be upheld. So Carson began hurriedly:

"Look here, you chaps, I've — we've sent for you to tell you you're a good deal too cheeky to the Sixth — have been for some time — and — and we've stood about as much as we're goin' to, and it seems you've been cursin' and swearin' at Tulke on the Bideford road this afternoon, and we're goin' to show you you can't do it. That's all."

"Well, that's awfully good of you," said Stalky, "but we happen to have a few rights of our own, too. You can't, just because you happen to be made prefects, haul up seniors and jaw 'em on spec., like a house-master. *We* aren't fags, Carson. This kind of thing may do for Davies tertius, but it won't do for us."

"It's only old Prout's lunacy that we weren't prefects long ago. You know that," said McTurk. "You haven't any tact."

"Hold on," said Beetle. "A prefects' meetin' has to be reported to the Head. I want to know if the Head backs Tulke in this business?"

"Well — well, it isn't exactly a prefects' meeting," said Carson. "We only called you in to warn you."

"But all the prefects are here," Beetle insisted. "Where's the difference?"

"My gum!" said Stalky. "Do you mean to

say you've just called us in for a jaw — after comin' to us before the whole school at tea an' givin' 'em the impression it was a prefects' meeting? 'Pon my Sam, Carson, you'll get into trouble, you will."

"Hole-an'-corner business — hole-an'-corner business," said McTurk, wagging his head. "Beastly suspicious."

The Sixth looked at each other uneasily. Tulke had called three prefects' meetings in two terms, till the Head had informed the Sixth that they were expected to maintain discipline without the recurrent menace of his authority. Now, it seemed that they had made a blunder at the outset, but any right-minded boy would have sunk the legality and been properly impressed by the Court. Beetle's protest was distinct "cheek."

"Well, you chaps deserve a lickin'," cried one Naughten incautiously. Then was Beetle filled with a noble inspiration.

"For interferin' with Tulke's amours, eh?" Tulke turned a rich sloe colour. "Oh, no, you don't!" Beetle went on. "You've had your innings. We've been sent up for cursing and swearing at you, and we're goin' to be let off with a warning! *Are* we? Now then, you're goin' to catch it."

"I — I — I —" Tulke began. "Don't let that young devil start jawing."

"If you've anything to say you must say it decently," said Carson.

"Decently? I will. Now look here. When we went into Bideford we met this ornament of the Sixth — is that decent enough? — hanging about on the road with a nasty look in his eye. We didn't know *then* why he was so anxious to stop us, *but* at five minutes to four, when we were in Yeo's shop, we saw Tulke *in* broad daylight, *with* his house-cap on, kissin' an' huggin' a woman *on* the pavement. Is that decent enough for you?"

"I didn't — I wasn't."

"We saw you!" said Beetle. "And now — I'll be decent, Carson — you sneak back with her kisses" (not for nothing had Beetle perused the later poets) "hot on your lips and call prefects' meetings, which aren't prefects' meetings, to uphold the honour of the Sixth." A new and heaven-cleft path opened before him that instant. "And how do we know," he shouted — "how do we know how many of the Sixth are mixed up in this abominable affair?"

"Yes, that's what we want to know," said McTurk, with simple dignity.

"We meant to come to you about it quietly, Carson, but you *would* have the meeting," said Stalky, sympathetically.

The Sixth were too taken aback to reply. So, carefully modelling his rhetoric on King, Beetle

followed up the attack, surpassing and surprising himself.

"It — it isn't so much the cynical immorality of the biznai, as the blatant indecency of it, that's so awful. As far as we can see, it's impossible for us to go into Bideford without runnin' up against some prefect's unwholesome amours. There's nothing to snigger over, Naughten. *I* don't pretend to know much about these things — but it seems to me a chap must be pretty far dead in sin" (that was a quotation from the school-chaplain) "when he takes to embracing his paramours" (that was Hakluyt) "before all the city" (a reminiscence of Milton). "He might at least have the decency — you're authorities on decency, I believe — to wait till dark. But he didn't. You didn't! Oh, Tulke! You — you incontinent little animal!"

"Here, shut up a minute. What's all this about, Tulke?" said Carson.

"I — look here. I'm awfully sorry. I never thought Beetle would take this line."

"Because — you've — no decency — you — thought — I hadn't," cried Beetle all in one breath.

"Tried to cover it all up with a conspiracy, did you?" said Stalky.

"Direct insult to all three of us," said McTurk. "A most filthy mind you have, Tulke."

"I'll shove you fellows outside the door if you go on like this," said Carson, angrily.

"That proves it's a conspiracy," said Stalky, with the air of a virgin martyr.

"I — I was goin' along the street — I swear I was," cried Tulke, "and — and I'm awfully sorry about it — a woman came up and kissed me. I swear I didn't kiss her."

There was a pause, filled by Stalky's long, liquid whistle of contempt, amazement, and derision.

"On my honour," gulped the persecuted one. "Oh, do stop him jawing."

"Very good," McTurk interjected. "We are compelled, of course, to accept your statement."

"Confound it!" roared Naughten. "You aren't head-prefect here, McTurk."

"Oh, well," returned the Irishman, "you know Tulke better than we do. I am only speaking for ourselves. *We* accept Tulke's word. But all I can say is that if I'd been collared in a similarly disgustin' situation, and had offered the same explanation Tulke has, I — I wonder what you'd have said. However, it seems on Tulke's word of honour —"

"And Tulkus — beg pardon — *kiss*, of course — Tulkiss is an honourable man," put in Stalky.

"— that the Sixth can't protect 'emselves from bein' kissed when they go for a walk!" cried Beetle, taking up the running with a rush. "Sweet business, isn't it? Cheerful thing to tell the fags,

ain't it? We aren't prefects, of course, but we aren't kissed very much. Don't think that sort of thing ever enters our heads; does it, Stalky?"

"Oh, no!" said Stalky, turning aside to hide his emotions. McTurk's face merely expressed lofty contempt and a little weariness.

"Well, you seem to know a lot about it," interposed a prefect.

"Can't help it — when you chaps shove it under our noses." Beetle dropped into a drawling parody of King's most biting colloquial style — the gentle rain after the thunder-storm. "Well, it's all very sufficiently vile and disgraceful, isn't it? I don't know who comes out of it worst: Tulke, who happens to have been caught; or the other fellows who haven't. And we —" here he wheeled fiercely on the other two — "we've got to stand up and be jawed by them because we've disturbed their intrigues."

"Hang it! I only wanted to give you a word of warning," said Carson, thereby handing himself bound to the enemy.

"Warn? You?" This with the air of one who finds loathsome gifts in his locker. "Carson, *would* you be good enough to tell us what conceivable thing there is that you are entitled to warn us about after this exposure? Warn? Oh, it's a little too much! Let's go somewhere where it's clean."

The door banged behind their outraged innocence.

"Oh, Beetle! Beetle! Beetle! Golden Beetle!" sobbed Stalky, hurling himself on Beetle's panting bosom as soon as they reached the study. "However did you do it?"

"Dear-r man!" said McTurk, embracing Beetle's head with both arms, while he swayed it to and fro on the neck, in time to this ancient burden —

> "Pretty lips — sweeter than — cherry or plum,
> Always look — jolly and — never look glum;
> Seem to say — Come away. Kissy! — come, come!
> Yummy-yum! Yummy-yum! Yummy-yum-yum!"

"Look out. You'll smash my gig-lamps," puffed Beetle, emerging. "Wasn't it glorious? Didn't I 'Eric' 'em splendidly? Did you spot my cribs from King? Oh, blow!" His countenance clouded. "There's one adjective I didn't use —'obscene.' Don't know how I forgot that. It's one of King's pet ones, too."

"Never mind. They'll be sendin' ambassadors round in half a shake to beg us not to tell the school. It's a deuced serious business for them," said McTurk. "Poor Sixth — poor old Sixth!"

"Immoral young rips," Stalky snorted. "What an example to pure-souled boys like you and me!"

And the Sixth in Carson's study sat aghast, glowering at Tulke, who was on the edge of tears.

"Well," said the head-prefect, acidly. "You've made a pretty average ghastly mess of it, Tulke."

"Why — why didn't you lick that young devil Beetle before he began jawing?" Tulke wailed.

"I knew there'd be a row," said a prefect of Prout's house. "But you would insist on the meeting, Tulke."

"Yes, and a fat lot of good it's done us," said Naughten. "They come in here and jaw our heads off when we ought to be jawin' them. Beetle talks to us as if we were a lot of blackguards and — and all that. And when they've hung us up to dry, they go out and slam the door like a house-master. All your fault, Tulke."

"But I didn't kiss her."

"You ass! If you'd said you *had* and stuck to it, it would have been ten times better than what you did," Naughten retorted. "Now they'll tell the whole school — and Beetle'll make up a lot of beastly rhymes and nicknames."

"But, hang it, she kissed me!" Outside of his work, Tulke's mind moved slowly.

"I'm not thinking of you. I'm thinking of *us*. I'll go up to their study and see if I can make 'em keep quiet!"

"Tulke's awf'ly cut up about this business — "

Naughten began, ingratiatingly, when he found Beetle.

"Who's kissed him this time?"

"—and I've come to ask you chaps, and especially you, Beetle, not to let the thing be known all over the school. Of course, fellows as senior as you are can easily see why."

"Um!" said Beetle, with the cold reluctance of one who foresees an unpleasant public duty. "I suppose I must go and talk to the Sixth again."

"Not the least need, my dear chap, I assure you," said Naughten, hastily. "I'll take any message you care to send."

But the chance of supplying the missing adjective was too tempting. So Naughten returned to that still undissolved meeting, Beetle, white, icy, and aloof, at his heels.

"There seems," he began, with laboriously crisp articulation —"there seems to'be a certain amount of uneasiness among you as to the steps we may think fit to take in regard to this last revelation of the —ah —obscene. If it is any consolation to you to know that we have decided—for the honour of the school, you understand — to keep our mouths shut as to these — ah — obscenities, you — ah — have it."

He wheeled, his head among the stars, and strode statelily back to his study, where Stalky

and McTurk lay side by side upon the table wiping their tearful eyes — too weak to move.

* * * * * * * * * *

The Latin prose paper was a success beyond their wildest dreams. Stalky and McTurk were, of course, out of all examinations (they did extra-tuition with the Head), but Beetle attended with zeal.

"This, I presume, is a par-ergon on your part," said King, as he dealt out the papers. "One final exhibition ere you are translated to loftier spheres? A last attack on the classics? It seems to confound you already."

Beetle studied the print with knit brows. "*I* can't make head or tail of it," he murmured "What does it mean?"

"No, no!" said King, with scholastic coquetry. "We depend upon *you* to give us the meaning. This is an examination, Beetle mine, not a guessing-competition. You will find your associates have no difficulty in —"

Tulke left his place and laid the paper on the desk. King looked, read, and turned a ghastly green.

"Stalky's missing a heap," thought Beetle. "Wonder how King'll get out of it?"

"There seems," King began with a gulp, "a certain modicum of truth in our Beetle's remark. I am — er — inclined to believe that the worthy

Randall must have dropped this in form — if you know what that means. Beetle, you purport to be an editor. Perhaps you can enlighten the form as to forms."

"What, sir? Whose form? I don't see that there's any verb in this sentence at all, an' — an' — the Ode is all different, somehow."

"I was about to say, before you volunteered your criticism, that an accident must have befallen the paper in type, and that the printer reset it by the light of nature. No —" he held the thing at arm's length — "our Randall is not an authority on Cicero or Horace."

"Rather mean to shove it off on Randall," whispered Beetle to his neighbour. "King must ha' been as screwed as an owl when he wrote it out."

"But we can amend the error by dictating it."

"No, sir." The answer came pat from a dozen throats at once. "That cuts the time for the exam. Only two hours allowed, sir. 'Tisn't fair. It's a printed-paper exam. How're we goin' to be marked for it? It's all Randall's fault. It isn't *our* fault, anyhow. An exam.'s an exam.," etc., etc.

Naturally Mr. King considered this was an attempt to undermine his authority, and, instead of beginning dictation at once, delivered a lecture on the spirit in which examinations should be approached. As the storm subsided, Beetle fanned it afresh.

"Eh? What? What was that you were saying to MacLagan?"

"I only said I thought the papers ought to have been looked at before they were given out, sir."

"Hear, hear!" from a back bench.

Mr. King wished to know whether Beetle took it upon himself personally to conduct the traditions of the school. His zeal for knowledge ate up another fifteen minutes, during which the prefects showed unmistakable signs of boredom.

"Oh, it was a giddy time," said Beetle, afterwards, in dismantled Number Five. "He gibbered a bit, and I kept him on the gibber, and then he dictated about a half of Dolabella & Co."

"Good old Dolabella! Friend of mine. Yes?" said Stalky, pensively.

"Then we had to ask him how every other word was spelt, of course, and he gibbered a lot more. He cursed me and MacLagan (Mac played up like a trump) and Randall, and the 'materialised ignorance of the unscholarly middle classes,' 'lust for mere marks,' and all the rest. It was what you might call a final exhibition — a last attack — a giddy par-ergon."

"But o' course he was blind squiffy when he wrote the paper. I hope you explained *that?*" said Stalky.

"Oh, yes. I told Tulke so. I said an immoral prefect an' a drunken house-master were le-

gitimate inferences. Tulke nearly blubbed. He's awfully shy of us since Mary's time."

Tulke preserved that modesty till the last moment — till the journey-money had been paid, and the boys were filling the brakes that took them to the station. Then the three tenderly constrained him to wait awhile.

"You see, Tulke, you may be a prefect," said Stalky, "but I've left the Coll. Do you see, Tulke, dear?"

"Yes, I see. Don't bear malice, Stalky."

"Stalky? Curse your impudence, you young cub," shouted Stalky, magnificent in top-hat, stiff collar, spats, and high-waisted, snuff-coloured ulster. "I want you to understand that *I'm* Mister Corkran, an' you're a dirty little schoolboy."

"Besides bein' frabjously immoral," said McTurk. "Wonder you aren't ashamed to foist your company on pure-minded boys like us."

"Come on, Tulke," cried Naughten, from the prefects' brake.

"Yes, we're comin'. Shove up and make room, you Collegers. You've all got to be back next term, with your 'Yes, sir,' an' 'O, sir,' an' 'No, sir,' an' 'Please, sir'; but before we say good-by we're going to tell you a little story. Go on, Dickie" (this to the driver); "we're quite ready. Kick that hat-box under the seat, an' don't crowd your Uncle Stalky."

"As nice a lot of high-minded youngsters as you'd wish to see," said McTurk, gazing round with bland patronage. "A trifle immoral, but then — boys will be boys. It's no good tryin' to look stuffy, Carson. *Mister* Corkran will now oblige with the story of Tulke an' Mary Yeo!"

SLAVES OF THE LAMP

Part II

SLAVES OF THE LAMP

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THAT very Infant who told the story of the capture of Boh Na Ghee[1] to Eustace Cleaver, novelist, inherited an estateful baronetcy with vast revenues, resigned the service, and became a landholder, while his mother stood guard over him to see that he married the right girl. But, new to his position, he presented the local volunteers with a full-sized magazine-rifle range, two miles long, across the heart of his estate, and the surrounding families, who lived in savage seclusion among woods full of pheasants, regarded him as an erring maniac. The noise of the firing disturbed their poultry, and Infant was cast out from the society of J. P.'s and decent men till such time as a daughter of the county might lure him back to right thinking. He took his revenge by filling the house with choice selections of old schoolmates home on leave — affable detrimentals, at whom the bicycle-riding maidens of the surrounding

[1] "A Conference of the Powers"; "Many Inventions."

families were allowed to look from afar. I knew when a troop-ship was in port by the Infant's invitations. Sometimes he would produce old friends of equal seniority; at others, young and blushing giants whom I had left small fags far down in the Lower Second; and to these Infant and the elders expounded the whole duty of man in the Army.

"I've had to cut the service," said the Infant; "but that's no reason why my vast stores of experience should be lost to posterity." He was just thirty, and in that same summer an imperious wire drew me to his baronial castle: "Got good haul; ex-*Tamar*. Come along."

It was an unusually good haul, arranged with a single eye to my benefit. There was a baldish, broken-down captain of Native Infantry, shivering with ague behind an indomitable red nose — and they called him Captain Dickson. There was another captain, also of Native Infantry, with a fair moustache; his face was like white glass, and his hands were fragile, but he answered joyfully to the cry of Tertius. There was an enormously big and well-kept man, who had evidently not campaigned for years, clean-shaved, soft-voiced, and cat-like, but still Abanazar for all that he adorned the Indian Political Service; and there was a lean Irishman, his face tanned blue-black with the suns of the Telegraph Department. Luckily the baize

doors of the bachelors' wing fitted tight, for we dressed promiscuously in the corridor or in each other's rooms, talking, calling, shouting, and anon waltzing by pairs to songs of Dick Four's own devising.

There were sixty years of mixed work to be sifted out between us, and since we had met one another from time to time in the quick scene-shifting of India — a dinner, camp, or a race-meeting here; a dak-bungalow or railway-station up-country somewhere else — we had never quite lost touch. Infant sat on the banisters, hungrily and enviously drinking it in. He enjoyed his baronetcy, but his heart yearned for the old days.

It was a cheerful babel of matters personal, provincial, and imperial, pieces of old call-over lists, and new policies, cut short by the roar of a Burmese gong, and we went down not less than a quarter of a mile of stairs to meet Infant's mother, who had known us all in our school-days and greeted us as if those had ended a week ago. But it was fifteen years since, with tears of laughter, she had lent me a grey princess-skirt for amateur theatricals.

That was a dinner from the "Arabian Nights," served in an eighty-foot hall full of ancestors and pots of flowering roses, and, what was more impressive, heated by steam. When it was ended and the little mother had gone away — ("You

boys want to talk, so I shall say good night now") — we gathered about an apple-wood fire, in a gigantic polished steel grate, under a mantelpiece ten feet high, and the Infant compassed us about with curious liqueurs and that kind of cigarette which serves best to introduce your own pipe.

"Oh, bliss!" grunted Dick Four from a sofa, where he had been packed with a rug over him. "First time I've been warm since I came home."

We were all nearly on top of the fire, except Infant, who had been long enough at Home to take exercise when he felt chilled. This is a grisly diversion, but much affected by the English of the Island.

"If you say a word about cold tubs and brisk walks," drawled McTurk, "I'll kill you, Infant. I've got a liver, too. 'Member when we used to think it a treat to turn out of our beds on a Sunday morning — thermometer fifty-seven degrees if it was summer — and bathe off the Pebbleridge? Ugh!"

"'Thing I don't understand," said Tertius, "was the way we chaps used to go down into the lavatories, boil ourselves pink, and then come up with all our pores open into a young snow-storm or a black frost. Yet none of our chaps died, that I can remember."

"'Talkin' of baths," said McTurk, with a chuckle, "'member our bath in Number Five,

Beetle, the night Rabbits-Eggs rocked King? What wouldn't I give to see old Stalky now! He is the only one of the two Studies not here."

"Stalky is the great man of his Century," said Dick Four.

"How d'you know?" I asked.

"How do I know?" said Dick Four, scornfully. "If you've ever been in a tight place with Stalky you wouldn't ask."

"I haven't seen him since the camp at Pindi in '87," I said. "He was goin' strong then — about seven feet high and four feet through."

"Adequate chap. Infernally adequate," said Tertius, pulling his moustache and staring into the fire.

"Got dam' near court-martialled and broke in Egypt in '84," the Infant volunteered. "I went out in the same trooper with him — as raw as he was. Only *I* showed it, and Stalky didn't."

"What was the trouble?" said McTurk, reaching forward absently to twitch my dress-tie into position.

"Oh, nothing. His colonel trusted him to take twenty Tommies out to wash, or groom camels, or something at the back of Suakin, and Stalky got embroiled with Fuzzies five miles in the interior. He conducted a masterly retreat and wiped up eight of 'em. He knew jolly well he'd no right to go out so far, so he took the initiative and

pitched in a letter to his colonel, who was frothing at the mouth, complaining of the 'paucity of support accorded to him in his operations.' Gad, it might have been one fat brigadier slangin' another! Then he went into the Staff Corps."

"That — is — entirely — Stalky," said Abanazar from his arm-chair.

"You've come across him, too?" I said.

"Oh, yes," he replied in his softest tones. "I was at the tail of that — that epic. Don't you chaps know?"

We did not — Infant, McTurk, and I; and we called for information very politely.

"'Twasn't anything," said Tertius. "We got into a mess up in the Khye-Kheen hills a couple o' years ago, and Stalky pulled us through. That's all."

McTurk gazed at Tertius with all an Irishman's contempt for the tongue-tied Saxon.

"Heavens!" he said. "And it's you and your likes govern Ireland. Tertius, aren't you ashamed?"

"Well, I can't tell a yarn. I can chip in when the other fellow starts *bukhing*. Ask him." He pointed to Dick Four, whose nose gleamed scornfully over the rug.

"I knew you wouldn't," said Dick Four. "Give me a whisky-and-soda. I've been drinking lemon-squash and ammoniated quinine while you chaps were bathin' in champagne, and my head's singin' like a top."

He wiped his ragged moustache above the drink; and, his teeth chattering in his head, began:

"You know the Khye-Kheen-Malôt expedition, when we scared the souls out of 'em with a field force they daren't fight against? Well, both tribes — there was a coalition against us — came in without firing a shot; and a lot of hairy villains, who had no more power over their men than I had, promised and vowed all sorts of things. On that very slender evidence, Pussy dear —"

"I was at Simla," said Abanazar, hastily.

"Never mind, you're tarred with the same brush. On the strength of those tuppenny-ha'-penny treaties, your asses of Politicals reported the country as pacified, and the Government, being a fool, as usual, began road-makin'— dependin' on local supply for labour. 'Member *that*, Pussy? 'Rest of our chaps who'd had no look-in during the campaign didn't think there'd be any more of it, and were anxious to get back to India. But I'd been in two of these little rows before, and I had my suspicions. I engineered myself, *summo ingenio*, into command of a road-patrol — no shovellin', only marching up and down genteelly with a guard. They'd withdrawn all the troops they could, but I nucleussed about forty Pathans, recruits chiefly, of my regiment, and sat tight at the base-camp while

the road-parties went to work, as per Political survey."

"Had some rippin' sing-songs in camp, too," said Tertius.

"My pup"—thus did Dick Four refer to his subaltern—"was a pious little beast. He didn't like the sing-songs, and so he went down with pneumonia. I rootled round the camp, and found Tertius gassing about as a D. A. Q. M. G., which, God knows, he isn't cut out for. There were six or eight of the old Coll at base-camp (we're always in force for a frontier row), but I'd heard of Tertius as a steady old hack, and I told him he had to shake off his D. A. Q. M. G. breeches and help *me*. Tertius volunteered like a shot, and we settled it with the authorities, and out we went—forty Pathans, Tertius, and me, looking up the road-parties. Macnamara's—'member old Mac, the Sapper, who played the fiddle so damnably at Umballa?—Mac's party was the last but one. The last was Stalky's. He was at the head of the road with some of his pet Sikhs. Mac said he believed he was all right."

"Stalky *is* a Sikh," said Tertius. "He takes his men to pray at the Durbar Sahib at Amritsar, regularly as clockwork, when he can."

"Don't interrupt, Tertius. It was about forty miles beyond Mac's before I found him; and my men pointed out gently, but firmly, that the coun-

try was risin'. What kind o' country, Beetle? Well, *I'm* no word-painter, thank goodness, but *you* might call it a hellish country! When we weren't up to our necks in snow, we were rolling down the khud. The well-disposed inhabitants, who were to supply labour for the road-making (don't forget that, Pussy dear), sat behind rocks and took pot-shots at us. 'Old, old story! We all legged it in search of Stalky. I had a feeling that he'd be in good cover, and about dusk we found him and his road-party, as snug as a bug in a rug, in an old Malôt stone fort, with a watch-tower at one corner. It overhung the road they had blasted out of the cliff fifty feet below; and under the road things went down pretty sheer, for five or six hundred feet, into a gorge about half a mile wide and two or three miles long. There were chaps on the other side of the gorge scientifically gettin' our range. So I hammered on the gate and nipped in, and tripped over Stalky in a greasy, bloody old poshteen, squatting on the ground, eating with his men. I'd only seen him for half a minute about three months before, but I might have met him yesterday. He waved his hand all sereno.

"'Hullo, Aladdin! Hullo, Emperor!' he said. 'You're just in time for the performance.'

"I saw his Sikhs looked a bit battered. 'Where's your command? Where's your subaltern?' I said.

"'Here — all there is of it,' said Stalky. 'If you want young Everett, he's dead, and his body's in the watch-tower. They rushed our road-party last week, and got him and seven men. We've been besieged for five days. I suppose they let you through to make sure of you. The whole country's up. 'Strikes me you've walked into a first-class trap.' He grinned, but neither Tertius nor I could see where the deuce the fun was. We hadn't any grub for our men, and Stalky had only four days' whack for his. That came of dependin' upon your asinine Politicals, Pussy dear, who told us that the inhabitants were friendly.

"To make us *quite* comfy, Stalky took us up to the watch-tower to see poor Everett's body, lyin' in a foot o' drifted snow. It looked like a girl of fifteen — not a hair on the little fellow's face. He'd been shot through the temple, but the Malôts had left their mark on him. Stalky unbuttoned the tunic, and showed it to us — a rummy sickle-shaped cut on the chest. 'Member the snow all white on his eyebrows, Tertius? 'Member when Stalky moved the lamp and it looked as if he was alive?"

"Ye-es," said Tertius, with a shudder. "'Member the beastly look on Stalky's face, though, with his nostrils all blown out, same as he used to look when he was bullyin' a fag? That was a lovely evening"

"We held a council of war up there over Everett's body. Stalky said the Malôts and Khye-Kheens were up together; havin' sunk their blood-feuds to settle us. The chaps we'd seen across the gorge were Khye-Kheens. It was about half a mile from them to us as a bullet flies, and they'd made a line of sungars under the brow of the hill to sleep in and starve us out. The Malôts, he said, were in front of us promiscuous. There wasn't good cover behind the fort, or they'd have been there, too. Stalky didn't mind the Malôts half as much as he did the Khye-Kheens. He said the Malôts were treacherous curs. What I couldn't understand was, why in the world the two gangs didn't join in and rush us. There must have been at least five hundred of 'em. Stalky said they didn't trust each other very well, because they were ancestral enemies when they were at home; and the only time they'd tried a rush he'd hove a couple of blasting-charges among 'em, and that had sickened 'em a bit.

"It was dark by the time we finished, and Stalky, always sereno, said: 'You command now. I don't suppose you mind my taking any action I may consider necessary to reprovision the fort?' I said, 'Of course not,' and then the lamp blew out. So Tertius and I had to climb down the tower steps (we didn't want to stay with Everett) and got back to our men. Stalky had gone off—

to count the stores, I supposed. Anyhow, Tertius and I sat up in case of a rush (they were plugging at us pretty generally, you know), relieving each other till the mornin'.

"Mornin' came. No Stalky. Not a sign of him. I took counsel with his senior native officer — a grand, white-whiskered old chap — Rutton Singh, from Jullunder-way. He only grinned, and said it was all right. Stalky had been out of the fort twice before, somewhere or other, accordin' to him. He said Stalky 'ud come back unchipped, and gave me to understand that Stalky was an invulnerable *Guru* of sorts. All the same, I put the whole command on half rations, and set 'em to pickin' out loopholes.

"About noon there was no end of a snow-storm, and the enemy stopped firing. We replied gingerly, because we were awfully short of ammunition. 'Don't suppose we fired five shots an hour, but we generally got our man. Well, while I was talking with Rutton Singh I saw Stalky coming down from the watch-tower, rather puffy about the eyes, his poshteen coated with claret-coloured ice.

"'No trustin' these snow-storms,' he said. 'Nip out quick and snaffle what you can get. There's a certain amount of friction between the Khye-Kheens and the Malôts just now.'

"I turned Tertius out with twenty Pathans, and

they bucked about in the snow for a bit till they came on to a sort of camp about eight hundred yards away, with only a few men in charge and half a dozen sheep by the fire. They finished off the men, and snaffled the sheep and as much grain as they could carry, and came back. No one fired a shot at 'em. There didn't seem to be anybody about, but the snow was falling pretty thick.

"'That's good enough,' said Stalky when we got dinner ready and he was chewin' mutton-kababs off a cleanin'-rod. 'There's no sense riskin' men. They're holding a powwow between the Khye-Kheens and the Malôts at the head of the gorge. I don't think these so-called coalitions are much good.'

"Do you know what that maniac had done? Tertius and I shook it out of him by instalments. There was an underground granary cellar-room below the watch-tower, and in blasting the road Stalky had blown a hole into one side of it. Being no one else *but* Stalky, he'd kept the hole open for his own ends; and laid poor Everett's body slap over the well of the stairs that led down to it from the watch-tower. He'd had to move and replace the corpse every time he used the passage. The Sikhs wouldn't go near the place, of course. Well, he'd got out of this hole, and dropped on to the road. Then, in the night *and* a howling snow-storm, he'd dropped over the edge of the

khud, made his way down to the bottom of the gorge, forded the nullah, which was half frozen, climbed up on the other side along a track he'd discovered, and come out on the right flank of the Khye-Kheens. He had then — listen to this! — crossed over a ridge that paralleled their rear, walked half a mile behind that, and come out on the left of their line where the gorge gets shallow and where there was a regular track between the Malôt and the Khye-Kheen camps. That was about two in the morning, and, as it turned out, a man spotted him — a Khye-Kheen. So Stalky abolished him quietly, and left him — *with* the Malôt mark on his chest, same as Everett had.

"'I was just as economical as I could be,' Stalky said to us. 'If he'd shouted I should have been slain. I'd never had to do that kind of thing but once before, and that was the first time I tried that path. It's perfectly practicable for infantry, you know.'

"'What about your first man?' I said.

"'Oh, that was the night after they killed Everett, and I went out lookin' for a line of retreat for my men. A man found me. I abolished him — *privatim* — scragged him. But on thinkin' it over it occurred to me that if I could find the body (I'd hove it down some rocks) I might decorate it with the Malôt mark and leave it to the Khye-Kheens to draw inferences. So I went out again

the next night and did. The Khye-Kheens are shocked at the Malôts perpetratin' these two dastardly outrages after they'd sworn to sink all blood-feuds. I lay up behind their sungars early this morning and watched 'em. They all went to confer about it at the head of the gorge. Awf'ly annoyed they are. Don't wonder.' You know the way Stalky drops out his words, one by one."

"My God!" said the Infant, explosively, as the full depth of the strategy dawned on him.

"Dear-r man!" said McTurk, purring rapturously.

"Stalky stalked." said Tertius. "That's all there is to it."

"No, he didn't," said Dick Four. "Don't you remember how he insisted that he had only applied his luck? Don't you remember how Rutton Singh grabbed his boots and grovelled in the snow, and how our men shouted?"

"None of our Pathans believed that was luck," said Tertius. "They swore Stalky ought to have been born a Pathan, and — 'member we nearly had a row in the fort when Rutton Singh said Stalky was a Pathan? Gad, how furious the old chap was with my Jamadar! But Stalky just waggled his finger and they shut up."

"Old Rutton Singh's sword was half out, though, and he swore he'd cremate every Khye-Kheen and

Malôt he killed. That made the Jamadar pretty wild, because he didn't mind fighting against his own creed but he wasn't going to crab a fellow Mussulman's chances of Paradise. Then Stalky jabbered Pushtu and Punjabi in alternate streaks. Where the deuce did he pick up his Pushtu from, Beetle?"

"Never mind his language, Dick," said I. "Give us the gist of it."

"I flatter myself I can address the wily Pathan on occasion, but, hang it all, I can't make puns in Pushtu, or top off my arguments with a smutty story, as he did. He played on those two old dogs o' war like a — like a concertina. Stalky said — and the other two backed up his knowledge of Oriental nature — that the Khye-Kheens and the Malôts between 'em would organise a combined attack on us that night, as a proof of good faith. They wouldn't drive it home, though, because neither side would trust the other on account, as Rutton Singh put it, of the little accidents. Stalky's notion was to crawl out at dusk with his Sikhs, manœuvre 'em along this ungodly goat-track that he'd found, to the back of the Khye-Kheen position, and then lob in a few long shots at the Malôts when the attack was well on. 'That'll divert their minds and help to agitate 'em,' he said. 'Then you chaps can come out and sweep up the pieces, and we'll rendezvous at the head of the

gorge. After that, I move we get back to Mac's camp and have something to eat.'"

"*You* were commandin'?" the Infant suggested.

"I was about three months senior to Stalky, and two months Tertius's senior," Dick Four replied. "*But* we were all from the same old Coll. I should say ours was the only little affair on record where some one wasn't jealous of some one else."

"*We* weren't," Tertius broke in, "but there was another row between Gul Sher Khan and Rutton Singh. Our Jamadar said — he was quite right — that no Sikh living could stalk worth a damn; and that Koran Sahib had better take out the Pathans, who understood that kind of mountain work. Rutton Singh said that Koran Sahib jolly well knew every Pathan was a born deserter, and every Sikh was a gentleman, even if he couldn't crawl on his belly. Stalky struck in with some woman's proverb or other, that had the effect of doublin' both men up with a grin. He said the Sikhs and the Pathans could settle their claims on the Khye-Kheens and Malôts later on, but he was going to take his Sikhs along for this mountain-climbing job, because Sikhs could shoot. They can, too. Give 'em a mule-load of ammunition apiece, and they're perfectly happy."

"And out he gat," said Dick Four. "As soon as it was dark, and he'd had a bit of a snooze, him and thirty Sikhs went down through the staircase

in the tower, every mother's son of 'em salutin' little Everett where It stood propped up against the wall. The last I heard him say was, 'Kubbadar! tumbleinga!'[1] and they tumbleingaed over the black edge of nothing. Close upon 9 P. M. the combined attack developed; Khye-Kheens across the valley, and Malôts in front of us, pluggin' at long range and yellin' to each other to come along and cut our infidel throats. Then they skirmished up to the gate, and began the old game of callin' our Pathans renegades, and invitin' 'em to join the holy war. One of our men, a young fellow from Dera Ismail, jumped on the wall to slang 'em back, and jumped down, blubbing like a child. He'd been hit smack in the middle of the hand. 'Never saw a man yet who could stand a hit in the hand without weepin' bitterly. It tickles up all the nerves. So Tertius took his rifle and smote the others on the head to keep them quiet at the loop-holes. The dear children wanted to open the gate and go in at 'em generally, but that didn't suit our book.

"At last, near midnight, I heard the wop, wop, wop, of Stalky's Martinis across the valley, and some general cursing among the Malôts, whose main body was hid from us by a fold in the hill-side. Stalky was brownin' 'em at a great rate, and very naturally they turned half right and

[1] "Look out; you'll fall!"

began to blaze at their faithless allies, the Khye-Kheens — regular volley firin'. In less than ten minutes after Stalky opened the diversion they were going it hammer and tongs, both sides the valley. When we could see, the valley was rather a mixed-up affair. The Khye-Kheens had streamed out of their sungars above the gorge to chastise the Malôts, and Stalky — I was watching him through my glasses — had slipped in behind 'em. Very good. The Khye-Kheens had to leg it along the hillside up to where the gorge got shallow and they could cross over to the Malôts, who were awfully cheered to see the Khye-Kheens taken in the rear.

"Then it occurred to me to comfort the Khye-Kheens. So I turned out the whole command, and we advanced *à la pas de charge*, doublin' up what, for the sake of argument, we'll call the Malôts' left flank. Even then, if they'd sunk their differences, they could have eaten us alive; but they'd been firin' at each other half the night, and they went on firin'. Queerest thing you ever saw in your born days! As soon as our men doubled up to the Malôts, they'd blaze at the Khye-Kheens more zealously than ever, to show they were on our side, run up the valley a few hundred yards, and halt to fire again. The moment Stalky saw our game he duplicated it his side the gorge; and, by Jove! the Khye-Kheens did just the same thing."

"Yes, but," said Tertius, "you've forgot him playin' 'Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby' on the bugle to hurry us up."

"Did he?" roared McTurk. Somehow we all began to sing it, and there was an interruption.

"Rather," said Tertius, when we were quiet. No one of the Aladdin company could forget that tune. "Yes, he played 'Patsy.' Go on, Dick."

"Finally," said Dick Four, "we drove both mobs into each other's arms on a bit of level ground at the head of the valley, and saw the whole crew whirl off, fightin' and stabbin' and swearin' in a blindin' snow-storm. They were a heavy, hairy lot, and we didn't follow 'em.

"Stalky had captured one prisoner — an old pensioned Sepoy of twenty-five years' service, who produced his discharge — an awf'ly sportin' old card. He had been tryin' to make his men rush us early in the day. He was sulky — angry with his own side for their cowardice — and Rutton Singh wanted to bayonet him — Sikhs don't understand fightin' against the Government after you've served it honestly — but Stalky rescued him, and froze on to him tight — with ulterior motives, I believe. When we got back to the fort, we buried young Everett — Stalky wouldn't hear of blowin' up the place — and bunked. We'd only lost ten men, all told."

"Only ten, out of seventy. How did you lose 'em?" I asked.

"Oh, there was a rush on the fort early in the night, and a few Malôts got over the gate. It was rather a tight thing for a minute or two, but the recruits took it beautifully. Lucky job we hadn't any badly wounded men to carry, because we had forty miles to Macnamara's camp. By Jove, how we legged it! Half-way in, old Rutton Singh collapsed, so we slung him across four rifles and Stalky's overcoat; and Stalky, his prisoner, and a couple of Sikhs were his bearers. After that I went to sleep. You can, you know, on the march, when your legs get properly numbed. Mac swears we all marched into his camp snoring and dropped where we halted. His men lugged us into the tents like gram-bags. I remember wakin' up and seein' Stalky asleep with his head on old Rutton Singh's chest. *He* slept twenty-four hours. I only slept seventeen, but then I was coming down with dysentery."

"Coming down? What rot! He had it on him before we joined Stalky in the fort," said Tertius.

"Well, *you* needn't talk! You hove your sword at Macnamara and demanded a drum-head court-martial every time you saw him. The only thing that soothed you was putting you under arrest every half-hour. You were off your head for three days."

"Don't remember a word of it," said Tertius, placidly. "I remember my orderly giving me milk, though."

"How did Stalky come out?" McTurk demanded, puffing hard over his pipe.

"Stalky? Like a serene Brahmini bull. Poor old Mac was at his Royal Engineers' wits' end to know what to do. You see I was putrid with dysentery, Tertius was ravin', half the men had frost-bite, and Macnamara's orders were to break camp and come in before winter. So Stalky, who hadn't turned a hair, took half his supplies to save him the bother o' luggin' 'em back to the plains, and all the ammunition he could get at, and, *consilio et auxilio Rutton Singhi*, tramped back to his fort with all his Sikhs and his precious prisoner, *and* a lot of dissolute hangers-on that he and the prisoner had seduced into service. He had sixty men of sorts — and his brazen cheek. Mac nearly wept with joy when he went. You see there weren't any explicit orders to Stalky to come in before the passes were blocked: Mac is a great man for orders, and Stalky's a great man for orders — when they suit his book."

"He told me he was goin' to the Engadine," said Tertius. "Sat on my cot smokin' a cigarette, and makin' me laugh till I cried. Macnamara bundled the whole lot of us down to the plains next day. We were a walkin' hospital."

"Stalky told me that Macnamara was a simple godsend to him," said Dick Four. "I used to see him in Mac's tent listenin' to Mac playin' the fiddle, and, between the pieces, wheedlin' Mac out of picks and shovels and dynamite cartridges hand-over-fist. Well, that was the last we saw of Stalky. A week or so later the passes were shut with snow, and I don't think Stalky wanted to be found particularly just then."

"He didn't," said the fair and fat Abanazar. "He didn't. Ho, ho!"

Dick Four threw up his thin, dry hand with the blue veins at the back of it. "Hold on a minute, Pussy; I'll let you in at the proper time. I went down to my regiment, and that spring, five months later, I got off with a couple of companies on detachment: nominally to look after some friends of ours across the border; actually, of course, to recruit. It was a bit unfortunate, because an ass of a young Naick carried a frivolous blood-feud he'd inherited from his aunt into those hills, and the local gentry wouldn't volunteer into my corps. Of course, the Naick had taken short leave to manage the business; that was all regular enough; *but* he'd stalked my pet orderly's uncle. It was an infernal shame, because I knew Harris of the Ghuznees would be covering that ground three months later, and he'd snaffle all the chaps I had my eyes on. Everybody was down on the Naick,

because they felt he ought to have had the decency to postpone his — his disgustful amours till our companies were full strength.

"Still the beast had a certain amount of professional feeling left. He sent one of his aunt's clan by night to tell me that, if I'd take safeguard, he'd put me on to a batch of beauties. I nipped over the border like a shot, and about ten miles the other side, in a nullah, my rapparee-in-charge showed me about seventy men variously armed, but standing up like a Queen's company. Then one of 'em stepped out and lugged round an old bugle, just like — who's the man? — Bancroft, ain't it? — feeling for his eye-glass in a farce, and played 'Arrah, Patsy, mind the baby. Arrah, Patsy, mind' — that was as far as he could get."

That, also, was as far as Dick Four could get, because we had to sing the old song through twice, again and once more, and subsequently, in order to repeat it.

"He explained that if I knew the rest of the song he had a note for me from the man the song belonged to. Whereupon, my children, I finished that old tune on that bugle, and *this* is what I got. I knew you'd like to look at it. Don't grab." (We were all struggling for a sight of the well-known unformed handwriting.) "I'll read it aloud.

"'Fort Everett, February 19.

"'Dear Dick, or Tertius: The bearer of this is in charge of seventy-five recruits, all pukka devils, but desirous of leading new lives. They have been slightly polished, and after being boiled may shape well. I want you to give thirty of them to my adjutant, who, though God's own ass, will need men this spring. The rest you can keep. You will be interested to learn that I have extended my road to the end of the Malôt country. All headmen and priests concerned in last September's affair worked one month each, supplying road metal from their own houses. Everett's grave is covered by a forty-foot mound, which should serve well as a base for future triangulations. Rutton Singh sends his best salaams. I am making some treaties, and have given my prisoner — who also sends his salaams — local rank of Khan Bahadur.

"'A. L. Cockran.'

"Well, that was all," said Dick Four, when the roaring, the shouting, the laughter, and, I think, the tears, had subsided. "I chaperoned the gang across the border as quick as I could. They were rather homesick, but they cheered up when they recognised some of my chaps, who had been in the Khye-Kheen row, and they made a rippin' good lot. It's rather more than three hundred miles from Fort Everett to where I picked 'em up. Now, Pussy, tell 'em the latter end o' Stalky as you saw it."

Abanazar laughed a little nervous, misleading, official laugh.

"Oh, it wasn't much. I was at Simla in the

spring, when our Stalky, out of his snows, began corresponding direct with the Government."

"After the manner of a king," suggested Dick Four.

"My turn now, Dick. He'd done a whole lot of things he shouldn't have done, and constructively pledged the Government to all sorts of action."

"Pledged the State's ticker, eh?" said McTurk, with a nod to me.

"About that; but the embarrassin' part was that it was all so thunderin' convenient, so well reasoned, don't you know? Came in as pat as if he'd had access to all sorts of information — which he couldn't, of course."

"Pooh!" said Tertius, "I back Stalky against the Foreign Office any day."

"He'd done pretty nearly everything he could think of, except strikin' coins in his own image and superscription, all under cover of buildin' this infernal road and bein' blocked by the snow. His report was simply amazin'. Von Lennaert tore his hair over it at first, and then he gasped, 'Who the dooce is this unknown Warren Hastings? He must be slain. He must be slain officially! The Viceroy'll never stand it. It's unheard of. He must be slain by His Excellency in person. Order him up here and pitch in a stinger.' Well, I sent him no end of an official stinger, and I pitched in an unofficial telegram at the same time."

"You!" This with amazement from the Infant, for Abanazar resembled nothing so much as a fluffy Persian cat.

"Yes—me," said Abanazar. "'Twasn't much, but after what you've said, Dicky, it was rather a coincidence, because I wired:

> "'Aladdin now has got his wife,
> Your Emperor is appeased.
> I think you'd better come to life:
> We hope you've all been pleased.'

"Funny how that old song came up in my head. That was fairly non-committal and encouragin'. The only flaw was that his Emperor wasn't appeased by very long chalks. Stalky extricated himself from his mountain fastnesses and loafed up to Simla at his leisure, to be offered up on the horns of the altar."

"But," I began, "surely the Commander-in-Chief is the proper—"

"His Excellency had an idea that if he blew up one single junior captain—same as King used to blow us up—he was holdin' the reins of empire, and, of course, as long as he had that idea, Von Lennaert encouraged him. I'm not sure Von Lennaert didn't put that notion into his head."

"They've changed the breed, then, since my time," I said.

"P'r'aps. Stalky was sent up for his wiggin'

like a bad little boy. I've reason to believe that His Excellency's hair stood on end. He walked into Stalky for one hour — Stalky at attention in the middle of the floor, and (so he vowed) Von Lennaert pretending to soothe down His Excellency's topknot in dumb-show in the background. Stalky didn't dare to look up, or he'd have laughed."

"Now, wherefore was Stalky not broken publicly?" said the Infant, with a large and luminous leer.

"Ah, wherefore?" said Abanazar. "To give him a chance to retrieve his blasted career, and not to break his father's heart. Stalky hadn't a father, but that didn't matter. He behaved like a — like the Sanawar Orphan Asylum, and His Excellency graciously spared him. Then he came round to my office and sat opposite me for ten minutes, puffing out his nostrils. Then he said, 'Pussy, if I thought that basket-hanger —'"

"Hah! He remembered *that*," said McTurk.

"'—that two-anna basket-hanger governed India, I swear I'd become a naturalised Muscovite to-morrow. I'm a *femme incomprise*. This thing's broken my heart. It'll take six months' shootin'-leave in India to mend it. Do you think I can get it, Pussy?'

"He got it in about three minutes and a half, and seventeen days later he was back in the arms of Rutton Singh — horrid disgraced — with orders to hand over his command, etc., to Cathcart MacMonnie."

"Observe!" said Dick Four. "One colonel of the Political Department in charge of thirty Sikhs, on a hilltop. Observe, my children!"

"Naturally, Cathcart not being a fool, even if he *is* a Political, let Stalky do his shooting within fifteen miles of Fort Everett for the next six months, and I always understood they and Rutton Singh *and* the prisoner were as thick as thieves. Then Stalky loafed back to his regiment, I believe. I've never seen him since."

"I have, though," said McTurk, swelling with pride.

We all turned as one man.

"It was at the beginning of this hot weather. I was in camp in the Jullunder doab and stumbled slap on Stalky in a Sikh village; sitting on the one chair of state, with half the population grovellin' before him, a dozen Sikh babies on his knees, an old harridan clappin' him on the shoulder, and a garland o' flowers round his neck. Told me he was recruitin'. We dined together that night, but he never said a word of the business at the Fort. Told me, though, that if I wanted any supplies I'd better say I was Koran Sahib's *bhai;* and I did, and the Sikhs wouldn't take my money."

"Ah! That must have been one of Rutton Singh's villages," said Dick Four; and we smoked for some time in silence.

"I say," said McTurk, casting back through

the years, "did Stalky ever tell you *how* Rabbits-Eggs came to rock King that night?"

"No," said Dick Four.

Then McTurk told.

"I see," said Dick Four, nodding. "Practically he duplicated that trick over again. There's nobody like Stalky."

"That's just where you make the mistake," I said. "India's full of Stalkies — Cheltenham and Haileybury and Marlborough chaps — that we don't know anything about, and the surprises will begin when there is really a big row on."

"Who will be surprised?" said Dick Four.

"The other side. The gentlemen who go to the front in first-class carriages. Just imagine Stalky let loose on the south side of Europe with a sufficiency of Sikhs and a reasonable prospect of loot. Consider it quietly."

"There's something in that, but you're too much of an optimist, Beetle," said the Infant.

"Well, I've a right to be. Ain't I responsible for the whole thing? You needn't laugh. Who wrote 'Aladdin now has got his wife' — eh?"

"What's that got to do with it?" said Tertius.

"Everything," said I.

"Prove it," said the Infant.

And I have.

PUCK OF POOK'S HILL

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PUCK'S SONG

See you the dimpled track that runs,
All hollow through the wheat?
O that was where they hauled the guns
That smote King Philip's fleet.

See you our little mill that clacks,
So busy by the brook?
She has ground her corn and paid her tax
Ever since Domesday Book.

See you our stilly woods of oak,
And the dread ditch beside?
O that was where the Saxons broke,
On the day that Harold died.

See you the windy levels spread
About the gates of Rye?
O that was where the Northmen fled,
When Alfred's ships came by.

See you our pastures wide and lone,
Where the red oxen browse?
O there was a City thronged and known,
Ere London boasted a house.

And see you, after rain, the trace
Of mound and ditch and wall?
O that was a Legion's camping-place,
When Cæsar sailed from Gaul.

And see you marks that show and fade,
Like shadows on the Downs?
O they are the lines the Flint Men made
To guard their wondrous towns.

Trackway and Camp and City lost,
Salt Marsh where now is corn;
Old Wars, old Peace, old Arts that ceased,
And so was England born!

She is not any common Earth,
Water or wood or air,
But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye,
Where you and I will fare.

WELAND'S SWORD

WELAND'S SWORD[1]

THE children were at the Theatre, acting to Three Cows as much as they could remember of *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Their father had made them a small play out of the big Shakespeare one, and they had rehearsed it with him and with their mother till they could say it by heart. They began where Nick Bottom the weaver comes out of the bushes with a donkey's head on his shoulder, and finds Titania, Queen of the Fairies, asleep. Then they skipped to the part where Bottom asked three little fairies to scratch his head and bring him honey, and they ended where he falls asleep in Titania's arms. Dan was Puck and Nick Bottom, as well as all three Fairies. He wore a pointy-eared cloth cap for Puck, and a paper donkey's head out of a Christmas cracker—but it tore if you were not careful—for Bottom. Una was Titania, with a wreath of columbines and a foxglove wand.

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The Theatre lay in a meadow called the Long Slip. A little mill-stream, carrying water to a mill two or three fields away, bent round one corner of it, and in the middle of the bend lay a large old fairy Ring of darkened grass, which was their stage. The mill-stream banks, overgrown with willow, hazel, and guelder rose made convenient places to wait in till your turn came, and a grown-up who had seen it said that Shakespeare himself could not have imagined a more suitable setting for his play. They were not, of course, allowed to act on Midsummer Night itself, but they went down after tea on Midsummer Eve, when the shadows were growing, and they took their supper—hard-boiled eggs, Bath Oliver biscuits, and salt in an envelope—with them. Three Cows had been milked and were grazing steadily with a tearing noise that one could hear all down the meadow; and the noise of the mill at work sounded like bare feet running on hard ground. A cuckoo sat on a gatepost singing his broken June tune, 'cuckoo-cuk,' while a busy kingfisher crossed from the mill-stream to the brook which ran on the other side of the meadow. Everything else was a sort of thick, sleepy stillness smelling of meadow-sweet and dry grass.

Their play went beautifully. Dan remembered all his parts — Puck, Bottom, and the three Fairies—and Una never forgot a word of Titania—

not even the difficult piece where she tells the Fairies how to feed Bottom with 'apricocks, ripe figs, and dewberries,' and all the lines end in 'ies.' They were both so pleased that they acted it three times over from beginning to end before they sat down in the unthistly centre of the Ring to eat eggs and Bath Olivers. This was when they heard a whistle among the alders on the bank, and they jumped.

The bushes parted. In the very spot where Dan had stood as Puck they saw a small, brown, broad-shouldered, pointy-eared person with a snub nose, slanting blue eyes, and a grin that ran right across his freckled face. He shaded his forehead as though he were watching Quince, Snout, Bottom, and the others rehearsing *Pyramis and Thisbe*, and, in a voice as deep as Three Cows asking to be milked, he began:

> 'What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here,
> So near the cradle of our fairy Queen?'

He stopped, hollowed one hand round his ear, and, with a wicked twinkle in his eye, went on:

> 'What a play toward? I'll be auditor,
> An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.'

The children looked and gasped! The small thing—he was no taller than Dan's shoulder—stepped quietly into the Ring.

'I'm rather out of practice,' said he; 'but that's the way my part ought to be played.'

Still the children stared at him—from his dark blue cap, like a big columbine flower, to his bare, hairy feet. At last he laughed.

'Please don't look like that. It is n't *my* fault. What else could you expect?' he said.

'We didn't expect any one,' Dan answered, slowly. 'This is our field.'

'Is it?' said their visitor, sitting down. 'Then what on Human Earth made you act *Midsummer Night's Dream* three times over, *on* Midsummer Eve, *in* the middle of a Ring, and under—right *under* one of my oldest hills in Old England? Pook's Hill—Puck's Hill—Puck's Hill—Pook's Hill! It's as plain as the nose on my face.'

He pointed to the bare, fern-covered slope of Pook's Hill that runs up from the far side of the mill-stream to a dark wood. Beyond that wood the ground rises and rises for five hundred feet, till at last you climb out on the bare top of Beacon Hill, to look over the Pevensey Levels and the Channel and half the naked South Downs.

'By Oak, Ash, and Thorn!' he cried, still laughing. 'If this had happened a few hundred years ago you'd have had all the People of the Hills out like bees in June!'

'We didn't know it was wrong,' said Dan.

'Wrong!' The little fellow shook with laugh-

ter. 'Indeed, it isn't wrong. You've done something that Kings and Knights and Scholars in old days would have given their crowns and spurs and books to find out. If Merlin himself had helped you, you couldn't have managed better! You've broken the Hills—you've broken the Hills! It hasn't happened in a thousand years.'

'We—we didn't mean to,' said Una.

'Of course you didn't! That's just why you did it. Unluckily the Hills are empty now, and all the People of the Hills are gone. I'm the only one left. I'm Puck, the oldest Old Thing in England, very much at your service if—if you care to have anything to do with me. If you don't, of course you've only to say so, and I'll go.'

He looked at the children and the children looked at him for quite half a minute. His eyes did not twinkle any more. They were very kind, and there was the beginning of a good smile on his lips.

Una put out her hand. 'Don't go,' she said. 'We like you'.

'Have a Bath Oliver,' said Dan, and he passed over the squashy envelope with the eggs.

'By Oak, Ash, and Thorn!' cried Puck, taking off his blue cap. 'I like you too. Sprinkle a little salt on the biscuit, Dan, and I'll eat it with

you. That 'll show you the sort of person I am. Some of us'—he went on, with his mouth full—'couldn't abide Salt, or Horseshoes over a door, or Mountain-ash berries, or Running Water, or Cold Iron, or the sound of Church Bells. But I'm Puck!'

He brushed the crumbs carefully from his doublet and shook hands,

'We always said, Dan and I,' Una stammered, 'that if it ever happened we'd know ex-actly what to do; but—but now it seems all different somehow.'

'She means meeting a fairy,' said Dan. '*I* never believed in 'em—not after I was six, anyhow.'

'I did,' said Una. 'At least, I sort of half believed till we learned "Farewell Rewards." Do you know "Farewell Rewards and Fairies"?'

'Do you mean this,' said Puck. He threw his big head back and began at the second line:—

'Good housewives now may say,
For now foul sluts in dairies
Do fare as well as they;
For though they sweep their hearths no less

('Join in, Una!)

'Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
Finds sixpence in her shoe?'

The echoes flapped all along the flat meadow.

'Of course I know it,' he said.

'And then there's the verse about the Rings,' said Dan. 'When I was little it always made me feel unhappy in my inside.'

'"Witness those rings and roundelays," do you mean?' boomed Puck, with a voice like a great church organ.

'Of theirs which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain.
But since of late Elizabeth,
And later James came in,
Are never seen on any heath
As when the time hath been.

'It's some time since I heard that sung, but there's no good beating about the bush: it's true. The People of the Hills have all left. I saw them come into Old England and I saw them go. Giants, trolls, kelpies, brownies, goblins, imps; wood, tree, mound, and water spirits; heath-people, hill-watchers, treasure-guards, good people, little people, pishogues, leprechauns, night-riders, pixies, nixies, gnomes and the rest—gone, all gone! I came into England with Oak, Ash, and Thorn, and when Oak, Ash, and Thorn are gone I shall go too.'

Dan looked round the meadow—at Una's oak by the lower gate, at the line of ash trees that over-

hang Otter Pool where the mill-stream spills over when the mill does not need it, and at the gnarled old white-thorn where Three Cows scratched their necks.

'It's all right,' he said; and added, 'I'm planting a lot of acorns this autumn too.'

'Then aren't you most awfully old?' said Una.

'Not old—fairly long-lived, as folk say hereabouts. Let me see—my friends used to set my dish of cream for me o' nights when Stonehenge was new. Yes, before the Flint Men made the Dewpond under Chanctonbury Ring.'

Una clasped her hands, cried 'Oh!' and nodded her head.

'She's thought a plan,' Dan explained. 'She always does like that when she thinks a plan.'

'I was thinking—suppose we saved some of our porridge and put it in the attic for you. They'd notice if we left it in the nursery.'

'Schoolroom,' said Dan, quickly, and Una flushed, because they had made a solemn treaty that summer not to call the schoolroom the nursery any more.

'Bless your heart o' gold!' said Puck. 'You'll make a fine considering wench some market-day. I really don't want you to put out a bowl for me; but if ever I need a bite, be sure I'll tell you.'

He stretched himself at length on the dry grass, and the children stretched out beside him, their bare

legs waving happily in the air. They felt they could not be afraid of him any more than of their particular friend old Hobden, the hedger. He did not bother them with grown-up questions, or laugh at the donkey's head, but lay and smiled to himself in the most sensible way.

'Have you a knife on you?' he said at last.

Dan handed over his big one-bladed outdoor knife, and Puck began to carve out a piece of turf from the centre of the Ring.

'What's that for—Magic?' said Una, as he pressed up the square of chocolate loam that cut like so much cheese.

'One of my little Magics,' he answered, and cut another. 'You see, I can't let you into the Hills because the People of the Hills have gone; but if you care to take seizin from me, I may be able to show you something out of the common here on Human Earth. You certainly deserve it.'

'What's taking seizin?' said Dan, cautiously.

'It's an old custom the people had when they bought and sold land. They used to cut out a clod and hand it over to the buyer, and you weren't lawfully seized of your land—it didn't really belong to you—till the other fellow had actually given you a piece of it—like this.' He held out the turves.

'But it's our own meadow,' said Dan, drawing back. 'Are you going to magic it away?'

Puck laughed. 'I know it's your meadow, but there's a great deal more in it than you or your father ever guessed. Try!'

He turned his eyes on Una.

'I'll do it,' she said. Dan followed her example at once.

'Now are you two lawfully seized and possessed of all Old England,' began Puck, in a sing-song voice. 'By Right of Oak, Ash, and Thorn are you free to come and go and look and know where I shall show or best you please. You shall see What you shall see and you shall hear What you shall hear, though It shall have happened three thousand year; and you shall know neither Doubt nor Fear. Fast! Hold fast all I give you.'

The children shut their eyes, but nothing happened.

'Well?' said Una, disappointedly opening them. 'I thought there would be dragons.'

'Though It shall have happened three thousand year,' said Puck, and counted on his fingers. 'No; I'm afraid there were no dragons three thousand years ago.'

'But there hasn't happened anything at all,' said Dan.

'Wait awhile,' said Puck. 'You don't grow an oak in a year—and Old England's older than twenty oaks. Let's sit down again and think. *I* can do that for a century at a time.'

'Ah, but you are fairy,' said Dan.

'Have you ever heard me use that word yet?' said Puck, quickly.

'No. You talk about "the People of the Hills," but you never say "fairies,"' said Una. 'I was wondering at that. Don't you like it?'

'How would you like to be called "mortal" or "human being" all the time?' said Puck; 'or "son of Adam" or "daughter of Eve"?'

'I shouldn't like it at all,' said Dan. 'That's how the Djinns and Afrits talk in the *Arabian Nights*.'

'And that's how *I* feel about saying—that word that I don't say. Besides, what you call *them* are made-up things the People of the Hills have never heard of—little buzzflies with butterfly wings and gauze petticoats, and shiny stars in their hair, and a wand like a schoolteacher's cane for punishing bad boys and rewarding good ones. *I* know 'em!'

'We don't mean that sort,' said Dan. 'We hate 'em too.'

'Exactly,' said Puck. 'Can you wonder that the People of the Hills don't care to be confused with that painty-winged, wand-waving, sugar-and-shake-your-head set of imposters? Butterfly wings, indeed! I've seen Sir Huon and a troop of his people setting off from Tintagel Castle for Hy-Brasil in the teeth of a sou'-westerly gale, with the spray flying all over the castle, and the Horses of

the Hill wild with fright. Out they'd go in a lull, screaming like gulls, and back they'd be driven five good miles inland before they could come head to wind again. Butterfly-wings! It was Magic—Magic as black as Merlin could make it, and the whole sea was green fire and white foam with singing mermaids in it. And the Horses of the Hill picked their way from one wave to another by the lightning flashes! *That* was how it was in the old days!'

'Splendid,' said Dan, but Una shuddered.

'I'm glad they're gone, then; but what made the People of the Hills go away?' Una asked.

'Different things. I'll tell you one of them some day—the thing that made the biggest flit of any,' said Puck. 'But they didn't all flit at once. They dropped off, one by one, through the centuries. Most of them were foreigners who couldn't stand our climate. *They* flitted early.'

'How early?' said Dan.

'A couple of thousand years or more. The fact is they began as Gods. The Phœnicians brought some over when they came to buy tin; and the Gauls, and the Jutes, and the Danes, and the Frisians, and the Angeles brought more when they landed. They were always landing in those days, or being driven back to their ships, and they always brought their Gods with them. England is a bad country for Gods. Now, *I* began as I

mean to go on. A bowl of porridge, a dish of milk, and a little quiet fun with the country folk in the lanes was enough for me then, as it is now. I belong here, you see, and I have been mixed up with people all my days. But most of the others insisted on being Gods, and having temples, and altars, and priests, and sacrifices of their own.'

'People burned in wicker baskets?' said Dan. 'Like Miss Blake tells us about?'

'All sorts of sacrifices,' said Puck. 'If it wasn't men, it was horses, or cattle, or pigs, or metheglin —that's a sticky, sweet sort of beer. I never liked it. They were a stiff-necked, extravagant set of idols, the Old Things. But what was the result? Men don't like being sacrificed at the best of times; they don't even like sacrificing their farm-horses. After a while men simply left the Old Things alone, and the roofs of their temples fell in, and the Old Things had to scuttle out and pick up a living as they could. Some of them took to hanging about trees, and hiding in graves and groaning o' nights. If they groaned loud enough and long enough they might frighten a poor countryman into sacrificing a hen, or leaving a pound of butter for them! I remember one Goddess called Belisama. She became a common wet water-spirit somewhere in Lancashire. And there were hundreds of other friends of mine. First they were Gods. Then they were People of the Hills, and

then they flitted to other places because they couldn't get on with the English for one reason or another. There was only one Old Thing I remember, who honestly worked for his living after he came down in the world. He was called Weland, and he was a smith to some Gods. I've forgotten their names, but he used to make them swords and spears. I think he claimed kin with Thor of the Scandinavians.'

'*Heroes of Asgard* Thor?' said Una. She had been reading the book.

'Perhaps,' answered Puck. 'None the less, when bad times came, he didn't beg or steal. He worked; and I was lucky enough to be able to do him a good turn.'

'Tell us about it,' said Dan. 'I think I like hearing of Old Things.'

They rearranged themselves comfortably, each chewing a grass stem. Puck propped himself on one strong arm and went on:

'Let's think! I met Weland first on a November afternoon in a sleet storm on Pevensey Level——'

'Pevensey? Over the hill, you mean?' Dan pointed south.

'Yes; but it was all marsh in those days, right up to Horsebridge and Hydeneye. I was on Beacon Hill—they called it Brunanburgh then—when I saw the pale flame that burning thatch

makes, and I went down to look. Some pirates—I think they must have been Peofn's men—were burning a village on the Levels, and Weland's image—a big, black wooden thing with amber beads round its neck—lay in the bows of a black thirty-two-oar galley that they had just beached. Bitter cold it was! There were icicles hanging from her deck, and the oars were glazed over with ice, and there was ice on Weland's lips. When he saw me he began a long chant in his own tongue, telling me how he was going to rule England, and how I should smell the smoke of his altars from Lincolnshire to the Isle of Wight. *I* didn't care! I'd seen too many Gods charging into Old England to be upset about it. I let him sing himself out while his men were burning the village, and then I said (I don't know what put it into my head), "Smith of the Gods," I said, "the time comes when I shall meet you plying your trade for hire by the wayside."'

'What did Weland say?' said Una. 'Was he angry?'

'He called me names and rolled his eyes, and I went away to wake up the people inland. But the pirates conquered the country, and for centuries Weland was a most important God. He had temples everywhere—from Lincolnshire to the Isle of Wight, as he said—and his sacrifices were simply scandalous. To do him justice, he preferred horses

to men; but men *or* horses, I knew that presently he'd have to come down in the world—like the other Old Things. I gave him lots of time—I gave him about a thousand years—and at the end of 'em I went into one of his temples near Andover to see how he prospered. There was his altar, and there was his image, and there were his priests, and there were the congregation, and everybody seemed quite happy, except Weland and the priests. In the old days the congregation were unhappy until the priests had chosen their sacrifices; and so would *you* have been. When the service began a priest rushed out, dragged a man up to the altar, pretended to hit him on the head with a little gilt axe, and the man fell down and pretended to die. Then everybody shouted: "A sacrifice to Weland! A sacrifice to Weland!"'

'And the man wasn't really dead?' said Una.

'Not a bit. All as much pretence as a dolls' tea-party. Then they brought out a splendid white horse, and the priest cut some hair from its mane and tail and burned it on the altar, shouting, "A sacrifice!" That counted the same as if a man and a horse had been killed. I saw poor Weland's face through the smoke, and I couldn't help laughing. He looked so disgusted and so hungry, and all he had to satisfy himself was a horrid smell of burning hair. Just a dolls' tea party!

'I judged it better not to say anything then

('twouldn't have been fair), and the next time I came to Andover, a few hundred years later, Weland and his temple were gone, and there was a Christian bishop in a Church there. None of the People of the Hills could tell me anything about him, and I supposed that he had left England.' Puck turned; lay on the other elbow, and thought for a long time.

'Let's see,' he said at last. 'It must have been some few years later—a year or two before the Conquest, I think—that I came back to Pook's Hill here, and one evening I heard old Hobden talking about Weland's Ford.'

'If you mean old Hobden the hedger, he's only seventy-two. He told me so himself,' said Dan. 'He's a intimate friend of ours.'

'You're quite right,' Puck replied. 'I meant old Hobden's ninth great-grandfather. He was a free man and burned charcoal hereabouts. I've known the family, father and son, so long that I get confused sometimes. Hob of the Dene was my Hobden's name, and he lived at the Forge cottage. Of course, I pricked up my ears when I heard Weland mentioned, and I scuttled through the woods to the Ford just beyond Bog Wood yonder.' He jerked his head westward, where the valley narrows between wooded hills and steep hop-fields.

'Why, that's Willingford Bridge,' said Una.

'We go there for walks often. There's a king-fisher there.'

'It was Weland's Ford then, dear. A road led down to it from the Beacon on the top of the hill—a shocking bad road it was—and all the hill-side was thick, thick oak-forest, with deer in it. There was no trace of Weland, but presently I saw a fat old farmer riding down from the Beacon under the greenwood tree. His horse had cast a shoe in the clay, and when he came to the Ford he dismounted, took a penny out of his purse, laid it on a stone tied the old horse to an oak, and called out: 'Smith, Smith, here is work for you!' Then he sat down and went to sleep. You can imagine how *I* felt when I saw a white-bearded, bent old blacksmith in a leather apron creep out from behind the oak and begin to shoe the horse. It was Weland himself. I was so astonished that I jumped out and said: "What on Human Earth are you doing here, Weland?"'

'Poor Weland!' sighed Una.

'He pushed the long hair back from his forehead (he didn't recognize me at first). Then he said: "*You* ought to know. You foretold it, Old Thing. I'm shoeing horses for hire. I'm not even Weland now," he said. "They call me Wayland-Smith."'

'Poor chap!' said Dan. 'What did you say?'

'What could I say? He looked up, with the

horse's foot on his lap, and he said, smiling, "I remember the time when I wouldn't have accepted this old bag of bones as a sacrifice, and now I'm glad enough to shoe him for a penny."

'"Isn't there any way for you to get back to Valhalla, or wherever you come from?" I said.

'"I'm afraid not," he said, rasping away at the hoof. He had a wonderful touch with horses. The old beast was whinnying on his shoulder. "You may remember that I was not a gentle God in my Day and my Time and my Power. I shall never be released till some human being truly wishes me well."

'"Surely," said I, "the farmer can't do less than that. You're shoeing the horse all round for him."

'"Yes," said he, "and my nails will hold a shoe from one full moon to the next. But farmers and Weald Clay," said he, "are both uncommon cold and sour."

'Would you believe it, that when that farmer woke and found his horse shod he rode away without one word of thanks? I was so angry that I wheeled his horse right round and walked him back three miles to the Beacon just to teach the old sinner politeness.'

'Were you invisible?' said Una. Puck nodded, gravely.

'The Beacon was always laid in those days

ready to light, in case the French landed at Pevensey; and I walked the horse about and about it that lee-long summer night. The farmer thought he was bewitched—well, he *was* of course—and began to pray and shout. *I* didn't care! I was as good a Christian as he any fair-day in the County, and about four o'clock in the morning a young novice came along from the monastery that used to stand on the top of Beacon Hill.'

'What's a novice?' said Dan.

'It really means a man who is beginning to be a monk, but in those days people sent their sons to a monastery just the same as a school. This young fellow had been to a monastery in France for a few months every year, and he was finishing his studies in the monastery close to his home here. Hugh was his name, and he had got up to go fishing hereabouts. His people owned all this valley. Hugh heard the farmer shouting, and asked him what in the world he meant. The old man spun him a wonderful tale about fairies and goblins and witches; and I *know* he hadn't seen a thing except rabbits and red deer all that night. (The People of the Hills are like otters—they don't show except when they choose.) But the novice wasn't a fool. He looked down at the horse's feet, and saw the new shoes fastened as only Weland knew how to fasten 'em. (Weland had a way of turning down the nails that folks called the Smith's Clinch.)

'"H'm!" said the novice. "Where did you get your horse shod?"

'The farmer wouldn't tell him at first, because the priests never liked their people to have any dealings with the Old Things. At last he confessed that the Smith had done it. "What did you pay him?" said the novice. "Penny," said the farmer, very sulkily. "That's less than a Christian would have charged," said the novice. "I hope you threw a 'Thank you' into the bargain." "No," said the farmer; "Wayland-Smith's a heathen." "Heathen or no heathen," said the novice, "you took his help, and where you get help there you must give thanks." "What?" said the farmer—he was in a furious temper because I was walking the old horse in circles all this time—"What, you young jackanapes?" said he. "Then by your reasoning I ought to say 'Thank you' to Satan if he helped me?" "Don't roll about up there splitting reasons with me," said the novice. "Come back to the Ford and thank the Smith, or you'll be sorry."

'Back the farmer had to go! I led the horse, though no one saw me, and the novice walked beside us, his gown swishing through the shiny dew and his fishing-rod across his shoulders spear-wise. When we reached the Ford again—it was five o'clock and misty still under the oaks—the farmer simply wouldn't say "Thank you." He

said he'd tell the Abbot that the novice wanted him to worship heathen gods. Then Hugh the novice lost his temper. He just cried, "Out!" put his arm under the farmer's fat leg, and heaved him from his saddle on to the turf, and before he could rise he caught him by the back of the neck and shook him like a rat till the farmer growled, "Thank you, Wayland-Smith."'

'Did Weland see all this?' said Dan.

'Oh, yes, and he shouted his old war-cry when the farmer thudded on to the ground. He was delighted. Then the novice turned to the oak and said, "Ho! Smith of the Gods, I am ashamed of this rude farmer; but for all you have done in kindness and charity to him and to others of our people, I thank you and wish you well." Then he picked up his fishing-rod—it looked more like a tall spear than ever—and tramped off down your valley.'

'And what did poor Weland do?' said Una.

'He laughed and cried with joy, because he had been released at last, and could go away. But he was an honest Old Thing. He had worked for his living and he paid his debts before he left. "I shall give that novice a gift," said Weland. "A gift that shall do him good the wide world over and Old England after him. Blow up my fire, Old Thing, while I get the iron for my last task." Then he made a sword—a dark grey, wavy-lined sword—and I blew the fire while he

hammered. By Oak, Ash, and Thorn, I tell you, Weland was a Smith of the Gods! He cooled that sword in running water twice, and the third time he cooled it in the evening dew, and he laid it out in the moonlight and said Runes (that's charms) over it, and he carved Runes of Prophecy on the blade. "Old Thing," he said to me, wiping his forehead, "this is the best blade that Weland ever made. Even the user will never know how good it is. Come to the monastery."

'We went to the dormitory where the monks slept. We saw the novice fast asleep in his cot, and Weland put the sword into his hand, and I remember the young fellow gripped it in his sleep. Then Weland strode as far as he dared into the Chapel and threw down all his shoeing tools—his hammer, and pincers, and rasps—to show that he had done with them for ever. It sounded like suits of armour falling, and the sleepy monks ran in, for they thought the monastery had been attacked by the French. The novice came first of all, waving his new sword and shouting Saxon battle-cries. When they saw the shoeing-tools they were very bewildered, till the novice asked leave to speak, and told what he had done to the farmer, and what he had said to Wayland-Smith, and how, though the dormitory light was burning, he had found the wonderful rune-carved sword in his cot.

'The Abbot shook his head at first, and then he laughed and said to the novice: "Son Hugh, it needed no sign from a heathen God to show me that you will never be a monk. Take your sword, and keep your sword, and go with your sword, and be as gentle as you are strong and courteous. We will hang up the Smith's tools before the Altar," he said, "because, whatever the Smith of the Gods may have been in the old days, we know that he worked honestly for his living and made gifts to Mother Church." Then they went to bed again, all except the novice, and he sat up in the garth playing with his sword. Then Weland said to me by the stables: "Farewell, Old Thing; you had the right of it. You saw me come to England, and you see me go. Farewell!"

'With that he strode down the hill to the corner of the Great Woods—Woods Corner, you call it now—to the very place where he had first landed—and I heard him moving through the thickets towards Horsebridge for a little, and then he was gone. That was how it happened. I saw it.'

Both children drew a long breath.

'But what happened to Hugh the novice?' said Una.

'And the sword?' said Dan.

Puck looked down the meadow that lay all quiet and cool in the shadow of Pook's Hill. A corncrake jarred in a hay-field near by, and the

small trouts of the brook began to jump. A big white moth flew unsteadily from the alders and flapped round the children's heads, and the least little haze of water-mist rose from the brook.

'Do you really want to know?' Puck said

'We do,' cried the children. 'Awfully!'

'Very good. I promised you that you shall see What you shall see, and you shall hear What you shall hear, though It shall have happened three thousand year; but just now it seems to me that, unless you go back to the house, people will be looking for you. I'll walk with you as far as the gate.'

'Will you be here when we come again?' they asked.

'Surely, sure-ly,' said Puck. 'I've been here some time already. One minute first, please.'

He gave them each three leaves—one of Oak, one of Ash, and one of Thorn.

'Bite these,' said he. 'Otherwise you might be talking at home of what you've seen and heard, and—if I know human beings—they'd send for the doctor. Bite!'

They bit hard, and found themselves walking side by side to the lower gate. Their father was leaning over it.

'And how did your play go?' he asked.

'Oh, splendidly,' said Dan. 'Only afterwards, I think, we went to sleep. It was very hot and quiet. Don't you remember, Una?'

Una shook her head and said nothing.
'I see,' said her father.

> 'Late—late in the evening Kilmeny came home,
> For Kilmeny had been she could not tell where,
> And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare.

But why are you chewing leaves at your time of life, daughter? For fun?'

'No. It was for something, but I can't azactly remember,' said Una.

And neither of them could till—

A TREE SONG

Of all the trees that grow so fair,
Old England to adorn,
Greater are none beneath the Sun,
Than Oak, and Ash, and Thorn.
Sing Oak, and Ash, and Thorn, good Sirs
(All of a Midsummer morn)!
Surely we sing no little thing,
In Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

Oak of the Clay lived many a day,
Or ever Æneas began;
Ash of the Loam was a lady at home,
When Brut was an outlaw man;
Thorn of the Down saw New Troy Town
(From which was London born);
Witness hereby the ancientry
Of Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

Yew that is old in churchyard mould,
He breedeth a mighty bow;
Alder for shoes do wise men choose,
And beech for cups also.

But when ye have killed, and your bowl is spilled,
And your shoes are clean outworn,
Back ye must speed for all that ye need,
To Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

Ellum she hateth mankind, and waiteth
Till every gust be laid,
To drop a limb on the head of him,
That anyway trusts her shade
But whether a lad be sober or sad,
Or mellow with ale from the horn,
He will take no wrong when he lieth along
'Neath Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

Oh, do not tell the Priest our plight,
Or he would call it a sin;
But—we have been out in the woods all night
A-conjuring Summer in!
And we bring you news by word of mouth—
Good news for cattle and corn—
Now is the Sun come up from the South,
With Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

Sing Oak, and Ash, and Thorn, good Sirs
(All of a Midsummer morn)!
England shall bide till Judgment Tide,
By Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

YOUNG MEN AT THE MANOR

YOUNG MEN AT THE MANOR

THEY were fishing, a few days later, in the bed of the brook that for centuries had cut deep into the soft valley soil. The trees closing overhead made long tunnels through which the sunshine worked in blobs and patches. Down in the tunnels were bars of sand and gravel, old roots and trunks covered with moss or painted red by the irony water; foxgloves growing lean and pale towards the light; clumps of fern and thirsty shy flowers who could not live away from moisture and shade. In the pools you could see the wave thrown up by the trouts as they charged hither and yon, and the pools were joined to each other—except in flood time, when all was one brown rush—by sheets of thin broken water that poured themselves chuckling round the darkness of the next bend.

This was one of the children's most secret

hunting-grounds, and their particular friend, old Hobden the hedger, had shown them how to use it. Except for the click of a rod hitting a low willow, or a switch and tussle among the young ash-leaves as a line hung up for the minute, nobody in the hot pasture could have guessed what game was going on among the trouts below the banks.

'We's got half-a-dozen,' said Dan, after a warm, wet hour. 'I vote we go up to Stone Bay and try Long Pool.'

Una nodded—most of her talk was by nods—and they crept from the gloom of the tunnels towards the tiny weir that turns the brook into the mill-stream. Here the banks are low and bare, and the glare of the afternoon sun on the Long Pool below the weir makes your eyes ache.

When they were in the open they nearly fell down with astonishment. A huge grey horse, whose tail-hairs crinkled the glassy water, was drinking in the pool, and the ripples about his muzzle flashed like melted gold. On his back sat an old, white-haired man dressed in a loose glimmery gown of chain-mail. He was bareheaded, and a nut-shaped iron helmet hung at his saddle-bow. His reins were of red leather five or six inches deep, scalloped at the edges, and his high padded saddle with its red girths was held fore and aft by a red leather breastband and crupper.

'Look!' said Una, as though Dan were not

staring his very eyes out. 'It's like the picture in your room—"Sir Isumbras at the Ford."'

The rider turned towards them, and his thin, long face was just as sweet and gentle as that of the knight who carries the children in that picture.

'They should be here now, Sir Richard,' said Puck's deep voice among the willow-herb.

'They are here,' the knight said, and he smiled at Dan with the string of trouts in his hand. 'There seems no great change in boys since mine fished this water.'

'If your horse has drunk, we shall be more at ease in the Ring,' said Puck; and he nodded to the children as though he had never magicked away their memories the week before.

The great horse turned and hoisted himself into the pasture with a kick and a scramble that tore the clods down rattling.

'Your pardon!' said Sir Richard to Dan. 'When these lands were mine, I never loved that mounted men should cross the brook except by the paved ford. But my Swallow here was thirsty, and I wished to meet you.'

'We're very glad you've come, sir,' said Dan. 'It doesn't matter in the least about the banks.'

He trotted across the pasture on the swordside of the mighty horse, and it was a mighty iron-handled sword that swung from Sir Richard's belt.

Una walked behind with Puck. She remembered everything now.

'I'm sorry about the Leaves,' he said, 'but it would never have done if you had gone home and told, would it?'

'I s'pose not,' Una answered. "But you said that all the fair—People of the Hills had left England.'

'So they have; but I told you that you should come and go and look and know, didn't I? The knight isn't a fairy. He's Sir Richard Dalyngridge, a very old friend of mine. He came over with William the Conqueror, and he wants to see you particularly.'

'What for?' said Una.

'On account of your great wisdom and learning,' Puck replied, without a twinkle.

'Us?' said Una. 'Why, I don't know my Nine Times—not to say it dodging; and Dan makes the most *awful* mess of fractions. He can't mean *us!*'

'Una!' Dan called back. 'Sir Richard says he is going to tell what happened to Weland's sword. He's got it. Isn't it splendid?'

'Nay—nay,' said Sir Richard, dismounting as they reached the Ring, in the bend of the mill-stream bank. 'It is you that must tell me, for I hear the youngest child in our England to-day is as wise as our wisest clerk.' He slipped the bit

out of Swallow's mouth, dropped the ruby-red reins over his head, and the wise horse moved off to graze.

Sir Richard (they noticed he limped a little) unslung his great sword.

'That's it,' Dan whispered to Una.

'This is the sword that Brother Hugh had from Wayland-Smith,' Sir Richard said. 'Once he gave it to me, but I would not take it; but at the last it became mine after such a fight as never christened man fought. See!' He half drew it from its sheath and turned it before them. On either side just below the handle, where the Runic letters shivered as though they were alive, were two deep gouges in the dull, deadly steel. 'Now, what Thing made those?' said he. 'I know not, but you, perhaps, can say.'

'Tell them all the tale, Sir Richard,' said Puck. 'It concerns their land somewhat.'

'Yes, from the very beginning,' Una pleaded, for the knight's good face and the smile on it more than ever reminded her of 'Sir Isumbras at the Ford.'

They settled down to listen, Sir Richard bareheaded to the sunshine, dandling the sword in both hands, while the grey horse cropped outside the Ring, and the helmet on the saddle-bow clinged softly each time he jerked his head.

'From the beginning, then,' Sir Richard said,

'since it concerns your land, I will tell the tale. When our Duke came out of Normandy to take his England, great knights (have ye heard?) came and strove hard to serve the Duke, because he promised them lands here, and small knights followed the great ones. My folk in Normandy were poor; but a great knight, Engerrard of the Eagle—Engenulf De Aquila—who was kin to my father, followed the Earl of Mortain, who followed William the Duke, and I followed De Aquila. Yes, with thirty men-at-arms out of my father's house and a new sword, I set out to conquer England three days after I was made knight. I did not then know that England would conquer me. We went up to Santlache with the rest—a very great host of us.'

'Does that mean the battle of Hastings—Ten Sixty-Six?' Una whispered, and Puck nodded, so as not to interrupt.

'At Santlache, over the hill yonder'—he pointed south-eastward towards Fairlight—'we found Harold's men. We fought. At the day's end they ran. My men went with De Aquila's to chase and plunder, and in that chase Engerrard of the Eagle was slain, and his son Gilbert took his banner and his men forward. This I did not know till after, for Swallow here was cut in the flank, so I stayed to wash the wound at a brook by a thorn. There a single Saxon cried out to

me in French, and we fought together. I should have known his voice, but we fought together. For a long time neither had any advantage, till by pure ill-fortune his foot slipped and his sword flew from his hand. Now I had but newly been made knight, and wished, above all, to be courteous and fameworthy, so I forebore to strike and bade him get his sword again. "A plague on my sword," said he. "It has lost me my first fight. You have spared my life. Take my sword." He held it out to me, but as I stretched my hand the sword groaned like a stricken man, and I leaped back crying, "Sorcery!"

[The children looked at the sword as though it might speak again.]

'Suddenly a clump of Saxons ran out upon me and, seeing a Norman alone, would have killed me, but my Saxon cried out that I was his prisoner, and beat them off. Thus, see you, he saved my life. He put me on my horse and led me through the woods ten long miles to this valley.'

'To here, d'you mean?' said Una.

'To this very valley. We came in by the Lower Ford under the King's Hill yonder'—he pointed eastward where the valley widens.

'And was that Saxon Hugh the novice?' Dan asked.

'Yes, and more than that. He had been for three years at the Monastery at Bec by Rouen,

where'—Sir Richard chuckled—'the Abbot Herluin would not suffer me to remain.'

'Why wouldn't he?' said Dan.

'Because I rode my horse into the refectory, when the scholars were at meat, to show the Saxon boys that we Normans were not afraid of an abbot. It was that very Saxon Hugh tempted me to do it, and we had not met since that day. I thought I knew his voice even inside my helmet, and, for all that our Lords fought, we each rejoiced we had not slain the other. He walked by my side, and he told me how a Heathen God, as he believed, had given him his sword, but he said he had never heard it sing before. I remember I warned him to beware of sorcery and quick enchantments.' Sir Richard smiled to himself. 'I was very young—very young!

'When we came to his house here we had almost forgotten that we had been at blows. It was near midnight, and the Great Hall was full of men and women waiting news. There I first saw his sister, the Lady Ælueva, of whom he had spoken to us in France. She cried out fiercely at me, and would have had me hanged in that hour, but her brother said that I had spared his life—he said not how he saved mine from his Saxons—and that our Duke had won the day; and even while they wrangled over my poor body, of a sudden he fell down in a swoon from his wounds.

'"This is *thy* fault," said the Lady Ælueva to me, and she kneeled above him and called for wine and cloths.

'"If I had known," I answered, "he should have ridden and I walked. But he set me on my horse; he made no complaint; he walked beside me and spoke merrily throughout. I pray I have done him no harm."

'"Thou hast need to pray," she said, catching up her underlip. "If he dies, thou shalt hang!"

'They bore off Hugh to his chamber; but three tall men of the house bound me and set me under the beam of the Great Hall with a rope round my neck. The end of the rope they flung over the beam, and they sat them down by the fire to wait word whether Hugh lived or died. They cracked nuts with their knife-hilts the while.'

'How did you feel?' said Dan.

'Very weary; but I did heartily pray for my schoolmate Hugh his health. About noon I heard horses in the valley, and the three men loosed my ropes and fled out, and De Aquila's men rode up. Gilbert de Aquila came with them, for it was his boast that, like his father, he forgot no man that served him. He was little, like his father, but terrible, with a nose like an eagle's nose and yellow eyes like an eagle. He rode tall war-horses—roans, which he bred himself—and he could never abide to be helped into the saddle. He saw

the rope hanging from the beam and laughed, and his men laughed, for I was too stiff to rise.

'"This is poor entertainment for a Norman knight," he said, "but, such as it is, let us be grateful. Show me, boy, to whom thou owest most, and we will pay them out of hand."'

'What did he mean? To kill 'em?' said Dan.

'Assuredly. But I looked at the Lady Ælueva where she stood among her maids, and her brother beside her. De Aquila's men had driven them all into the Great Hall.'

'Was she pretty?' said Una.

'In all my life I had never seen woman fit to strew rushes before my Lady Ælueva,' the knight replied, quite simply and quietly. 'As I looked at her I thought I might save her and her house by a jest.

'"Seeing that I came somewhat hastily and without warning," said I to De Aquila, "I have no fault to find with the courtesy that these Saxons have shown me." But my voice shook. It is—it was not good to jest with that little man.

'All were silent awhile, till De Aquila laughed. "Look, men—a miracle!" said he, "The fight is scarce sped, my father is not yet buried, and here we find our youngest knight already set down in his Manor, while his Saxons—ye can see it in their fat faces—have paid him homage and ser-

vice! By the Saints," he said, rubbing his nose, "I never thought England would be so easy won! Surely I can do no less than give the lad what he has taken. This Manor shall be thine, boy," he said, "till I come again, or till thou art slain. Now, mount, men, and ride. We follow our Duke into Kent to make him King of England."

'He drew me with him to the door while they brought his horse—a lean roan, taller than my Swallow here, but not so well girthed.

'"Hark to me," he said, fretting with his great war-gloves. "I have given thee this Manor, which is a Saxon hornets' nest, and I think thou wilt be slain in a month—as my father was slain. Yet if thou canst keep the roof on the hall, the thatch on the barn, and the plough in the furrow till I come back, thou shalt hold the Manor from me; for the Duke has promised our Earl Mortain all the lands by Pevensey, and Mortain will give me of them what he would have given my father. God knows if thou or I shall live till England is won; but remember, boy, that here and now fighting is foolishness and"—he reached for the reins—"craft and cunning is all."

'"Alas, I have no cunning," said I.

'"Not yet," said he, hopping aboard, foot in stirrup, and poking his horse in the belly with his toe. "Not yet, but I think thou hast a good teacher. Farewell! Hold the Manor and live.

Lose the Manor and hang," he said, and spurred out, his shield-straps squeaking behind him.

'So, children, here was I, little more than a boy, and Santlache fight not two days old, left alone with my thirty men-at-arms, in a land I knew not, among a people whose tongue I could not speak, to hold down the land which I had taken from them.'

'And that was here at home?' said Una.

'Yes, here. See! From the Upper Ford, Weland's Ford, to the Lower Ford, by the Belle Allée, west and east it ran half a league. From the Beacon of Brunanburgh behind us here, south and north it ran a full league—and all the woods were full of broken men from Santlache, Saxon thieves, Norman plunderers, robbers and deerstealers. A hornets' nest indeed!

'When De Aquila had gone, Hugh would have thanked me for saving their lives; but Lady Ælueva said that I had done it only for the sake of receiving the Manor.

'"How could I know that De Aquila would give it me?" I said. "If I had told him I had spent my night in your halter he would have burned the place twice over by now."

'"If any man had put *my* neck in a rope," she said, "I would have seen his house burned thrice over before I would have made terms."

'"But it was a woman," I said; and I laughed and she wept and said that I mocked her in her captivity.

'"Lady," said I, "there is no captive in this valley except one, and he is not a Saxon."

'At this she cried that I was a Norman thief, who came with false, sweet words, having intended from the first to turn her out into the fields to beg her bread. Into the fields! She had never seen the face of war!

'I was angry, and answered, "This much at least I can disprove, for I swear"—and on my sword-hilt I swore it in that place—"I swear I will never set foot in the Great Hall till the Lady Ælueva herself shall summons me there."

'She went away saying nothing, and I walked out, and Hugh limped after me, whistling dolorously (that is a custom of the English), and we came upon the three Saxons that had bound me. They were now bound by my men-at-arms, and behind them stood some fifty stark and sullen churls of the House and the Manor, waiting to see what should fall. We heard De Aquila's trumpets blow thin through the woods Kentward.

'"Shall we hang these?" said my men.

'"Then my churls will fight," said Hugh, beneath his breath; but I bade him ask the three what mercy they hoped for.

'"None," said they all. "She bade us hang thee if our master die. And we would have hanged thee. There is no more to it."

'As I stood doubting, a woman ran down from the oak wood above the King's Hill yonder, and cried out that some Normans were driving off the swine there.

'"Norman or Saxon," said I, "we must beat them back, or they will rob us every day. Out at them with any arms ye have!" So I loosed those three carles and we ran together, my men-at-arms and the Saxons with bills and bows which they had hidden in the thatch of their huts, and Hugh led them. Half-way up the King's Hill we found a false fellow from Picardy—a sutler that sold wine in the Duke's camp—with a dead knight's shield on his arm, a stolen horse under him, and some ten or twelve wastrels at his tail, all cutting and slashing at the pigs. We beat them off, and saved our pork. One hundred and seventy pigs we saved in that great battle.' Sir Richard laughed.

'That, then, was our first work together, and I bade Hugh tell his folk that so would I deal with any man, knight or churl, Norman or Saxon, who stole as much as one egg from our valley. Said he to me, riding home: "Thou hast gone far to conquer England this evening." I answered: "England must be thine and mine, then. Help me, Hugh, to deal aright with this people. Make them to know that if they slay me De Aquila will surely send to slay them, and he will put a worse man in my place." "That may well be true,"

said he, and gave me his hand. "Better the devil we know than the devil we know not, till we can pack you Normans home." And so, too, said his Saxons; and they laughed as we drove the pigs downhill. But I think some of them, even then, began not to hate me.'

'I like Brother Hugh,' said Una, softly.

'Beyond question he was the most perfect, courteous, valiant, tender, and wise knight that ever drew breath,' said Richard, caressing the sword. 'He hung up his sword—this sword—on the wall of the Great Hall, because he said it was fairly mine, and never he took it down till De Aquila returned, as I shall presently show. For three months his men and mine guarded the valley, till all robbers and nightwalkers learned there was nothing to get from us save hard tack and a hanging. Side by side we fought against all who came—thrice a week sometimes we fought—against thieves and landless knights looking for good manors. Then we were in some peace, and I made shift by Hugh's help to govern the valley—for all this valley of yours was my Manor—as a knight should. I kept the roof on the hall and the thatch on the barn, but . . . . The English are a bold people. His Saxons would laugh and jest with Hugh, and Hugh with them, and—this was marvellous to me—if even the meanest of them said that such and such a thing was the Cus-

tom of the Manor, then straightway would Hugh and such old men of the Manor as might be near forsake everything else to debate the matter—I have seen them stop the mill with the corn half ground—and if the custom or usage were proven to be as it was said, why, that was the end of it, even though it were flat against Hugh, his wish and command. Wonderful!'

'Aye,' said Puck, breaking in for the first time. 'The Custom of Old England was here before your Norman knights came, and it outlasted them, though they fought against it cruel.'

'Not I,' said Richard. 'I let the Saxons go their stubborn way, but when my own men-at-arms, Normans not six months in England, stood up and told me what was the custom of the country, *then* I was angry. Ah, good days! Ah, wonderful people! And I loved them all.'

The knight lifted his arms as though he would hug the whole dear valley, and Swallow, hearing the chink of his chain-mail, looked up and whinnied softly.

'At last,' he went on, 'after a year of striving and contriving and some little driving, De Aquila came to the valley, alone and without warning. I saw him first at the Lower Ford, with a swineherd's brat on his saddle-bow.

"There is no need for thee to give any account of thy stewardship," said he. "I have it all from

the child here." And he told me how the young thing had stopped his tall horse at the Ford, by waving of a branch, and crying that the way was barred. "And if one bold, bare babe be enough to guard the Ford in these days, thou hast done well," said he, and puffed and wiped his head.

'He pinched the child's cheek, and looked at our cattle in the flat by the brook.

'"Both fat," said he, rubbing his nose. "This is craft and cunning such as I love. What did I tell thee when I rode away, boy?"

'"Hold the Manor or hang," said I. I had never forgotten it.

'"True. And thou hast held." He clambered from his saddle and with sword's point cut out a turf from the bank and gave it me where I kneeled.'

Dan looked at Una, and Una looked at Dan.

'That's seizin,' said Puck in a whisper.

'"Now thou art lawfully seized of the Manor, Sir Richard," said he—'twas the first time he ever called me that—"thou and thy heirs for ever. This must serve till the King's clerks write out thy title on a parchment. England is all ours—if we can hold it."

'"What service shall I pay?" I asked, and I remember I was proud beyond words.

'"Knight's fee, boy, knight's fee!" said he, hopping round his horse on one foot. (Have I said he

was little, and could not endure to be helped to his saddle?) "Six mounted men or twelve archers thou shalt send me whenever I call for them, and—where got you that corn?" said he, for it was near harvest, and our corn stood well. "I have never seen such bright straw. Send me three bags of the same seed yearly, and furthermore, in memory of our last meeting—with the rope round thy neck—entertain me and my men for two days of each year in the Great Hall of thy Manor."

'"Alas!" said I, "then my Manor is already forfeit. I am under vow not to enter the Great Hall." And I told him what I had sworn to the Lady Ælueva.'

'And hadn't you ever been into the house since?' said Una.

'Never,' Sir Richard answered smiling. 'I had made me a little hut of wood up the hill, and there I did justice and slept. . . . De Aquila wheeled aside, and his shield shook on his back. "No matter, boy," said he. "I will remit the homage for a year."'

'He meant Sir Richard needn't give him dinner there the first year,' Puck explained.

'De Aquila stayed with me in the hut and Hugh, who could read and write and cast accounts, showed him the roll of the Manor, in which were written all the names of our fields and men, and he asked me a thousand questions touching the land, the timber,

the grazing, the mill, and the fish-ponds, and the worth of every man in the valley. But never he named Lady Ælueva's name, nor went he near the Great Hall. By night he drank with us in the hut. Yes, he sat on the straw like an eagle ruffled in her feathers, his yellow eyes rolling above the cup, and he pounced in his talk like an eagle, swooping from one thing to another, but always binding fast. Yes; he would lie still awhile, and then rustle in the straw, and speak sometimes as though he were King William himself, and anon he would speak in parables and tales, and if at once we saw not his meaning he would yerk us in the ribs with his scabbarded sword.

'"Look you, boys," said he, "I am born out of my due time. Five hundred years ago I would have made all England such an England as neither Dane, Saxon, nor Norman should have conquered. Five hundred years hence I should have been such a councillor to Kings as the world hath never dreamed of. 'Tis all here," said he, tapping his big head, "but it hath no play in this black age. Now Hugh here is a better man than thou art, Richard." He had made his voice harsh and croaking, like a raven's.

'"Truth," said I. "But for Hugh, his help and patience and long-suffering, I could never have kept the Manor."

'"Nor thy life either," said De Aquila. "Hugh

has saved thee not once, but a hundred times. Be still, Hugh!" he said. "Dost thou know, Richard, why Hugh slept, and why he still sleeps, among thy Norman men-at-arms?"

'"To be near me," said I, for I thought this was truth.

'"Fool!" said De Aquila. "It is because his Saxons have begged him to rise against thee, and to sweep every Norman out of the valley. No matter how I know. It is truth. Therefore Hugh hath made himself an hostage for thy life, well knowing that if any harm befell thee from his Saxons thy Normans would slay him without remedy. And this his Saxons know. It is true, Hugh?"

'"In some sort," said Hugh, shamefacedly; "at least, it was true half a year ago. My Saxons would not harm Richard now. I think they know him; but I judged it best to make sure."

'Look, children, what that man had done—and I had never guessed it! Night after night had he lain down among my men-at-arms, knowing that if one Saxon had lifted knife against me his life would have answered for mine.

'"Yes," said De Aquila. "And he is a swordless man." He pointed to Hugh's belt, for Hugh had put away his sword—did I tell you?—the day after it flew from his hand at Santlache. He carried only the short knife and the long-bow.

"Swordless and landless art thou, Hugh; and they call thee kin to Earl Godwin." (Hugh was indeed of Godwin's blood.) "The Manor that was thine was given to this boy and to his children for ever. Sit up and beg, for he can turn thee out like a dog, Hugh!"

'Hugh said nothing, but I heard his teeth grind, and I bade De Aquila, my own overlord, hold his peace, or I would stuff his words down his throat. Then De Aquila laughed till the tears ran down his face.

'"I warned the King," said he, "what would come of giving England to us Norman thieves. Here art thou, Richard, less than two days confirmed in thy Manor, and already thou hast risen against thy overlord. What shalt do to him, *Sir* Hugh?"

'"I am a swordless man," said Hugh. "Do not jest with me," and he laid his head on his knees and groaned.

'"The greater fool thou," said De Aquila, and all his voice changed; "for I have given thee the Manor of Dallington up the hill this half-hour since," and he yerked at Hugh with his scabbard across the straw.

'"To me?" said Hugh. "I am a Saxon, and, except that I love Richard here, I have not sworn fealty to any Norman."

'"In God's good time, which because of my

sins I shall not live to see, there will be neither Saxon nor Norman in England," said De Aquila. "If I know men, thou art more faithful unsworn than a score of Normans I could name. Take Dallington, and join Sir Richard to fight me to-morrow, if it please thee!"

'"Nay," said Hugh. "I am no child. Where I take a gift, there I render service"; and he put his hands between De Aquila's, and swore to be faithful, and, as I remember, I kissed him, and De Aquila kissed us both.

'We sat afterwards outside the hut while the sun rose, and De Aquila marked our churls going to their work in the fields, and talked of holy things, and how we should govern our Manors in time to come, and of hunting and of horse-breeding, and of the King's wisdom and unwisdom; for he spoke to us as though we were in all sorts now his brothers. Anon a churl stole up to me—he was one of the three I had not hanged a year ago—and he bellowed—which is the Saxon for whispering—that the Lady Ælueva would speak to me at the Great House. She walked abroad daily in the Manor, and it was her custom to send me word whither she went, that I might set an archer or two behind and in front to guard her. Very often I myself lay up in the woods and watched on her also.

'I went swiftly, and as I passed the great door it

opened from within, and there stood my Lady Ælueva, and she said to me: "Sir Richard, will it please you to enter your Great Hall?" Then she wept, but we were alone.'

The knight was silent for a long time, his face turned across the valley, smiling.

'Oh, well done!' said Una, and she clapped her hands very softly. 'She was sorry, and she said so.'

'Aye, she was sorry, and she said so,' said Sir Richard, coming back with a little start. 'Very soon —but *he* said it was two full hours later—De Aquila rode to the door, with his shield new scoured (Hugh had cleansed it), and demanded entertainment, and called me a false knight, that would starve his overlord to death. Then Hugh cried out that no man should work in the valley that day, and our Saxons blew horns, and set about feasting and drinking, and running of races, and dancing and singing; and De Aquila climbed upon a horse-block and spoke to them in what he swore was good Saxon, but no man understood it. At night we feasted in the Great Hall. and when the harpers and the singers were gone we four sat late at the high table. As I remember, it was a warm night with a full moon, and De Aquila bade Hugh take down his sword from the wall again, for the honour of the Manor of Dallington, and Hugh took it gladly enough. Dust lay on the hilt, for I saw him blow it off.

'She and I sat talking a little apart, and at first we thought the harpers had come back, for the Great Hall was filled with a rushing noise of music. De Aquila leaped up; but there was only the moonlight fretty on the floor.

'"Hearken!" said Hugh. "It is my sword," and as he belted it on the music ceased.

'"Over Gods, forbid that I should ever belt blade like that," said De Aquila. "What does it foretell?"

'"The Gods that made it may know. Last time it spoke was at Hastings, when I lost all my lands. Belike it sings now that I have new lands and am a man again," said Hugh.

'He loosed the blade a little and drove it back happily into the sheath, and the sword answered him low and crooningly, as—as a woman would speak to a man, her head on his shoulder.

'Now that was the second time in all my life I heard this Sword sing.' . . .

'Look!' said Una. 'There's mother coming down the Long Slip. What will she say to Sir Richard? She can't help seeing him.'

'And Puck can't magic us this time,' said Dan.

'Are you sure?' said Puck; and he leaned forward and whispered to Sir Richard, who, smiling, bowed his head.

'But what befell the sword and my brother

Hugh I will tell on another time,' said he, rising. 'Ohé, Swallow!'

The great horse cantered up from the far end of the meadow, close to mother.

They heard mother say: 'Children, Gleason's old horse has broken into the meadow again. Where did he get through?'

'Just below Stone Bay,' said Dan. 'He tore down simple flobs of the bank! We noticed it just now. And we've caught no end of fish. We've been at it all the afternoon.'

And they honestly believed that they had. They never noticed the Oak, Ash, and Thorn leaves that Puck had slyly thrown into their laps.

SIR RICHARD'S SONG

I followed my Duke ere I was a lover,
To rake from England fief and fee;
But now this game is the other way over—
But now England hath taken me!

I had my horse, my shield and banner,
And a boy's heart, so whole and free;
But now I sing in another manner—
But now England hath taken me!

As for my Father in his tower,
Asking news of my ship at sea;
He will remember his own hour—
Tell him England hath taken me!

As for my Mother in her bower,
That rules my Father so cunningly;
She will remember a maiden's power—
Tell her England hath taken me!

As for my Brother in Rouen city,
A nimble and naughty page is he;
But he will come to suffer and pity—
Tell him England hath taken me!

As for my little Sister waiting
In the pleasant orchards of Normandie;
Tell her youth is the time for mating—
Tell her England hath taken me!

As for my Comrades in camp and highway,
That lift their eyebrows scornfully;
Tell them their way is not my way—
Tell them England hath taken me!

Kings and Princes and Barons famed,
Knights and Captains in your degree;
Hear me a little before I am blamed—
Seeing England hath taken me!

Howso great man's strength be reckoned,
There are two things he cannot flee;
Love is the first, and Death is the second—
And Love, in England, hath taken me!

HARP SONG OF THE DANE WOMEN

What is a woman that you forsake her,
And the hearth-fire and the home-acre,
To go with the old grey Widow-maker?

She has no house to lay a guest in—
But one chill bed for all to rest in,
That the pale suns and the stray bergs nest in.

She has no strong white arms to fold you,
But the ten-times-fingering weed to hold you
Bound on the rocks where the tide has rolled you.

Yet when the signs of summer thicken,
And the ice breaks, and the birch-buds quicken,
Yearly you turn from our side, and sicken—

Sicken again for the shouts and the slaughters,
You steal away to the laughing waters,
And look at your ship in her winter quarters.

You forget our mirth, and talk at the tables,
The kine in the shed and the horse in the stables—
To pitch her sides and go over her cables!

Then you drive out where the storm-clouds swallow:
And the sound of your oar-blades falling hollow,
Is all we have left through the months to follow!

Ah, what is Woman that you forsake her,
And the hearth-fire and the home-acre,
To go with the old grey Widow-maker?

THE KNIGHTS OF THE JOYOUS VENTURE

THE KNIGHTS OF THE JOYOUS VENTURE

IT was too hot to run about in the open, so Dan asked their friend, old Hobden, to take their own dinghy from the pond and put her on the brook at the bottom of the garden. Her painted name was the *Daisy*, but for exploring expeditions she was the *Golden Hind* or the *Long Serpent*, or some such suitable name. Dan hiked and howked with a boat-hook (the brook was too narrow for sculls), and Una punted with a piece of hop-pole. When they came to a very shallow place (the *Golden Hind* drew quite three inches of water) they disembarked and scuffled her over the gravel by her tow-rope, and when they reached the overgrown banks beyond the garden they pulled themselves up stream by the low branches.

That day they intended to discover the North Cape like 'Othere, the old sea-captain,' in the book of verses which Una had brought with her;

but on account of the heat they changed it to a voyage up the Amazon and the sources of the Nile. Even on the shaded water the air was hot and heavy with drowsy scents, while outside, through breaks in the trees, the sunshine burned the pasture like fire. The kingfisher was asleep on his watching-branch, and the blackbirds scarcely took the trouble to dive into the next bush. Dragon-flies wheeling and clashing were the only things at work, except the moor-hens and a big Red Admiral who flapped down out of the sunshine for a drink.

When they reached Otter Pool the *Golden Hind* grounded comfortably on a shallow, and they lay beneath a roof of close green, watching the water trickle over the flood-gates down the mossy brick chute from the mill-stream to the brook. A big trout—the children knew him well—rolled head and shoulders at some fly that sailed round the bend, while once in just so often the brook rose a fraction of an inch against all the wet pebbles, and they watched the slow draw and shiver of a breath of air through the tree-tops. Then the little voices of the slipping water began again.

'It's like the shadows talking, isn't it?' said Una. She had given up trying to read. Dan lay over the bows, trailing his hands in the current. They heard feet on the gravel-bar that runs half across the pool and saw Sir Richard Dalyngridge standing over them.

'Was yours a dangerous voyage?' he asked smiling.

'She bumped a lot, sir,' said Dan. 'There's hardly any water this summer.'

'Ah, the brook was deeper and wider when my children played at Danish pirates. Are you pirate-folk?'

'Oh, no. We gave up being pirates years ago,' explained Una. 'We're nearly always explorers now. Sailing round the world, you know.'

'Round?' said Sir Richard. He sat him in the comfortable crotch of the old ash-root on the bank. 'How can it be round?'

'Wasn't it in your books?' Dan suggested. He had been doing geography at his last lesson.

'I can neither write nor read,' he replied. 'Canst *thou* read, child?'

'Yes,' said Dan, 'barring the very long words.'

'Wonderful! Read to me, that I may hear for myself.'

Dan flushed, but opened the book and began—gabbling a little—at 'The Discoverer of the North Cape.'

> 'Othere, the old sea captain,
> Who dwelt in Helgoland,
> To Alfred, lover of truth,
> Brought a snow-white walrus tooth,
> That he held in his right hand.'

'But—but—this I know! This is an old song!

This I have heard sung! This is a miracle,' Sir Richard interrupted. 'Nay, do not stop!' He leaned forward, and the shadows of the leaves slipped and slid upon his chain-mail.

'I ploughed the land with horses,
But my heart was ill at ease,
For the old sea-faring men
Came to me now and then
With their Sagas of the Seas.'

His hand fell on the hilt of the great sword. 'This is truth,' he cried, 'for so did it happen to me,' and he beat time delightedly to the tramp of verse after verse.

'"And now the land," said Othere,
"Bent southward suddenly,
And I followed the curving shore,
And ever southward bore
Into a nameless sea."'

'A nameless sea!' he repeated. 'So did I—so did Hugh and I.'

'Where did you go? Tell us,' said Una.

'Wait. Let me hear all first.' So Dan read to the poem's very end.

'Good,' said the knight. 'That is Othere's tale —even as I have heard the men in the Dane ships sing it. Not in those same valiant words, but something like to them.'

'Have you ever explored North?' Dan shut the book.

'Nay. My venture was South. Farther South than any man has fared, Hugh and I went down with Witta and his heathen.' He jerked the tall sword forward, and leaned on it with both hands; but his eyes looked long past them.

'I thought you always lived here,' said Una, timidly.

'Yes while my Lady Ælueva lived. But she died. She died. Then, my eldest son being a man, I asked De Aquila's leave that he should hold the Manor while I went on some journey or pilgrimage—to forget. De Aquila, whom the Second William had made Warden of Pevensey in Earl Mortain's place, was very old then, but still he rode his tall, roan horses, and in the saddle he looked like a little white falcon. When Hugh, at Dallington over yonder, heard what I did, he sent for my second son, whom being unmarried he had ever looked upon as his own child, and, by De Aquila's leave, gave him the Manor of Dallington to hold till he should return. Then Hugh came with me.'

'When did this happen?' said Dan.

'That I can answer to the very day, for as we rode with De Aquila by Pevensey—have I said that he was Lord of Pevensey and of the Honour of the Eagle?—to the Bordeaux ship that fetched

him his wines yearly out of France, a Marsh man ran to us crying that he had seen a great black goat which bore on his back the body of the King, and that the goat had spoken to him. On that same day Red William our King, the Conqueror's son, died of a secret arrow while he hunted in a forest. "This is a cross matter," said De Aquila, "to meet on the threshold of a journey. If Red William be dead I may have to fight for my lands. Wait a little."

'My Lady being dead, I cared nothing for signs and omens, nor Hugh either. We took that wine-ship to go to Bordeaux; but the wind failed while we were yet in sight of Pevensey; a thick mist hid us, and we drifted with the tide along the cliffs to the west. Our company was, for the most part, merchants returning to France, and we were laden with wool and there were three couple of tall hunting-dogs chained to the rail. Their master was a knight of Artois. His name I never learned, but his shield bore gold pieces on a red ground, and he limped much as I do, from a wound which he had got in his youth at Mantes siege. He served the Duke of Burgundy against the Moors in Spain, and was returning to that war with his dogs. He sang us strange Moorish songs that first night, and half persuaded us to go with him. I was on pilgrimage to forget—which is what no pilgrimage brings. I think I would have gone, but . . .

'Look you how the life and fortune of man changes! Towards morning a Dane ship, rowing silently, struck against us in the mist, and while we rolled hither and yon Hugh, leaning over the rail, fell outboard. I leaped after him, and we two tumbled aboard the Dane, and were caught and bound ere we could rise. Our own ship was swallowed up in the mist. I judge the Knight of the Gold pieces muzzled his dogs with his cloak, lest they should give tongue and betray the merchants, for I heard their baying suddenly stop.

'We lay bound among the benches till morning, when the Danes dragged us to the high deck by the steering-place, and their captain—Witta, he was called—turned us over with his foot. Bracelets of gold from elbow to armpit he wore, and his red hair was long as a woman's, and came down in plaited locks on his shoulder. He was stout, with bowed legs and long arms. He spoiled us of all we had, but when he laid hand on Hugh's sword and saw the runes on the blade hastily he thrust it back. Yet his covetousness overcame him and he tried again and again, and the third time the Sword sang loud and angrily, so that the rowers leaned on their oars to listen. Here they all spoke together, screaming like gulls, and a Yellow Man, such as I have never seen, came to the high deck and cut our bonds. He was yellow—not from sickness, but by nature. Yellow

as honey, and his eyes stood endwise in his head.'

'How do you mean?' said Una, her chin on her hand.

'Thus,' said Sir Richard. He put a finger to the corner of each eye, and pushed it up till his eyes narrowed to slits.

'Why, you look just like a Chinaman!' cried Dan. 'Was the man a Chinaman?'

'I know not what that may be. Witta had found him half dead among ice on the shores of Muscovy. *We* thought he was the devil. He crawled before us and brought food in a silver dish which these sea-wolves had robbed from some rich abbey, and Witta with his own hands gave us wine. He spoke a little in French, a little in South Saxon, and much in the Northman's tongue. We asked him to set us ashore, promising to pay him better ransom than he would get price if he sold us to the Moors—as once befell a knight of my acquaintance sailing from Flushing.

'"Not by my father Guthrum's head," said he. "The Gods sent ye into my ship for a luck-offering."

'At this I quaked, for I knew it was still the Dane's custom to sacrifice captives to their gods for fair weather.

'"A plague on thy four long bones!" said Hugh.

"What profit canst thou make of poor old pilgrims that can neither work nor fight?"

'"Gods forbid I should fight against thee, poor Pilgrim with the Singing Sword," said he. "Come with us and be poor no more. Thy teeth are far apart, which is a sure sign thou wilt travel and grow rich."

'"What if we will not come?" said Hugh.

'"Swim to England or France," said Witta. "We are midway between the two. Unless ye choose to drown yourselves no hair of your head will be harmed here aboard. We think ye bring us luck, and I myself know the runes on that Sword are good." He turned and bade them hoist sail.

'Hereafter all made way for us as we walked about the ship, and the ship was full of wonders.'

'What was she like?' said Dan.

'Long, low, and narrow, bearing one mast with a red sail, and rowed by fifteen oars aside,' the knight answered. 'At her bows was a deck under which men might lie, and at her stern another shut off by a painted door from the rowers' benches. Here Hugh and I slept, with Witta and the Yellow Man, upon tapestries as soft as wool. I remember'—he laughed to himself—'when first we entered there a loud voice cried, "Out swords! Out swords! Kill, kill!" Seeing us start Witta laughed, and showed us it was but a great-beaked

grey bird with a red tail. He sat her on his shoulder, and she called for bread and wine hoarsely, and prayed him to kiss her. Yet she was no more than a silly bird. But—ye knew this?' He looked at their smiling faces.

'We weren't laughing at you,' said Una. 'That must have been a parrot. It's just what Pollies do.'

'So we learned later But here is another marvel. The Yellow Man, whose name was Kitai, had with him a brown box. In the box was a blue bowl with red marks upon the rim, and within the bowl, hanging from a fine thread, was a piece of iron no thicker than that grass stem, and as long, maybe, as my spur, but straight. In this iron, said Witta, abode an Evil Spirit which Kitai the Yellow Man had brought by Art Magic out of his own country that lay three years' journey southward. The Evil Spirit strove day and night to return to his country, and therefore, look you, the iron needle pointed continually to the South.'

'South?' said Dan, suddenly, and put his hand into his pocket.

'With my own eyes I saw it. Every day and all day long, though the ship rolled, though the sun and the moon and the stars were hid, this blind Spirit in the iron knew whither it would go, and strained to the South. Witta called it the Wise Iron, because it showed him his way across the

unknowable seas.' Again Sir Richard looked keenly at the children. 'How think ye? Was it sorcery?'

'Was it anything like this?' Dan fished out his old brass pocket-compass, that generally lived with his knife and key-ring. 'The glass has got cracked, but the needle waggles all right, sir.'

The knight drew a long breath of wonder. 'Yes, yes. The Wise Iron shook and swung in just this fashion. Now it is still. Now it points to the South.'

'North,' said Dan.

'Nay, South! There is the South,' said Sir Richard. Then they both laughed, for naturally when one end of a straight compass-needle points to the North, the other must point to the South.

'Té,' said Sir Richard, clicking his tongue. 'There can be no sorcery if a child carries it. Wherefore does it point South—or North?'

'Father says that nobody knows,' said Una.

Sir Richard looked relieved. 'Then it may still be magic. It was magic to *us*. And so we voyaged. When the wind served we hoisted sail, and lay all up along the windward rail, our shields on our backs to break the spray. When it failed, they rowed with long oars; the Yellow Man sat by the Wise Iron, and Witta steered. At first I feared the great white-flowering waves, but as I saw how wisely Witta led his ship among them I grew bolder. Hugh liked it well from the first. My

skill is not upon the water; and rocks, and whirlpools such as we saw by the West Isles of France, where an oar caught on a rock and broke, are much against my stomach. We sailed South across a stormy sea, where by moonlight, between clouds, we saw a Flanders ship roll clean over and sink. Again, though Hugh laboured with Witta all night, I lay under the deck with the Talking Bird, and cared not whether I lived or died. There is a sickness of the sea which, for three days, is pure death! When we next saw land Witta said it was Spain, and we stood out to sea. That coast was full of ships busy in the Duke's war against the Moors, and we feared to be hanged by the Duke's men or sold into slavery by the Moors. So we put into a small harbour which Witta knew. At night men came down with loaded mules, and Witta exchanged amber out of the North against little wedges of iron and packets of beads in earthen pots. The pots he put under the decks, and the wedges of iron he laid on the bottom of the ship after he had cast out the stones and shingle which till then had been our ballast. Wine, too, he bought for lumps of sweet-smelling grey amber—a little morsel no bigger than a thumbnail purchased a cask of wine. But I speak like a merchant.'

'No, no! Tell us what you had to eat,' cried Dan.

'Meat dried in the sun, and dried fish and ground beans, Witta took in; and corded frails of a certain sweet, soft fruit, which the Moors use, which is like paste of figs, but with thin, long stones. Aha! Dates is the name.

'"Now," said Witta, when the ship was loaded, "I counsel you strangers, to pray to your gods, for from here on our road is No Man's road." He and his men killed a black goat for sacrifice on the bows; and the Yellow Man brought out a small, smiling image of dull-green glass and burned incense before it. Hugh and I commended ourselves to God, and Saint Bartholomew, and Our Lady of the Assumption, who was specially dear to my Lady. We were not young, but I think no shame to say, when as we drove out of that secret harbour at sunrise over a still sea, we two rejoiced and sang as did the knights of old when they followed our great Duke to England. Yet was our leader an heathen pirate; all our proud fleet but one galley perilously overloaded; for guidance we leaned on a pagan sorcerer; and our port was beyond the world's end. Witta told us that his father Guthrum had once in his life rowed along the shores of Africa to a land where naked men sold gold for iron and beads. There had he bought much gold, and no few elephants' teeth, and thither by help of the Wise Iron would Witta go. Witta feared nothing—except to be poor

" "My father told me," said Witta, "that a great Shoal runs three days' sail out from that land, and south of the shoal lies a Forest which grows in the sea. South and east of the Forest my father came to a place where the men hid gold in their hair; but all that country, he said, was full of Devils who lived in trees, and tore folk limb from limb. How think ye?"

' "Gold or no gold," said Hugh, fingering his sword, "it is a joyous venture. Have at these devils of thine, Witta!"

' "Venture!" said Witta, sourly. "I am only a poor sea-thief. I do not set my life adrift on a plank for joy, or the venture. Once I beach ship again at Stavanger, and feel the wife's arms round my neck, I'll seek no more ventures. A ship is heavier care than a wife or cattle."

'He leaped down among the rowers, chiding them for their little strength and their great stomachs. Yet Witta was a wolf in fight, and a very fox in cunning.

'We were driven South by a storm, and for three days and three nights he took the stern-oar and threddled the longship through the sea. When it rose beyond measure he brake a pot of whale's oil upon the water, which wonderfully smoothed it, and in that anointed patch he turned her head to the wind and threw out oars at the end of a rope, to make, he said, an anchor at which we lay rolling

sorely, but dry. This craft his father Guthrum had shown him. He knew, too, all the Leech-Book of Bald, who was a wise doctor, and he knew the Ship-Book of Hlaf the Woman, who robbed Egypt. He knew all the care of a ship.

'After the storm we saw a mountain whose top was covered with snow and pierced the clouds. The grasses under this mountain, boiled and eaten, are a good cure for soreness of the gums and swelled ankles. We lay there eight days, till men in skins threw stones at us. When the heat increased Witta spread a cloth on bent sticks above the rowers, for the wind failed between the Island of the Mountain and the shore of Africa, which is east of it. That shore is sandy, and we rowed along it within three bowshots. Here we saw whales, and fish in the shape of shields, but longer than our ship. Some slept, some opened their mouths at us, and some danced on the hot waters. The water was hot to the hand, and the sky was hidden by hot, grey mists, out of which blew a fine dust that whitened our hair and beards of a morning. Here, too, were fish that flew in the air like birds. They would fall on the laps of the rowers, and when we went ashore we would roast and eat them.'

The knight paused to see if the children doubted him, but they only nodded and said, 'Go on.'

'The yellow land lay on our left, the grey sea on our right. Knight though I was, I pulled my oar amongst the rowers. I caught seaweed and dried it, and stuffed it between the pots of beads lest they should break. Knighthood is for the land. At sea, look you, a man is but a spurless rider on a bridleless horse. I learned to make strong knots in ropes—yes, and to join two ropes end to end, so that even Witta could scarcely see where they had been married. But Hugh had tenfold more sea-cunning than I. Witta gave him charge of the rowers of the left side. Thorkild of Borkum, a man with a broken nose, that wore a Norman steel cap, had the rowers of the right, and each side rowed and sang against the other. They saw that no man was idle. Truly, as Hugh said, and Witta would laugh at him, a ship is all more care than a Manor.

'How? Thus. There was water to fetch from the shore when we could find it as well as wild fruit and grasses, and sand for scrubbing of the decks and benches to keep them sweet. Also we hauled the ship out on low islands and emptied all her gear, even to the iron wedges, and burned off the weed, that had grown on her, with torches of rush, and smoked below the decks with rushes dampened in salt water, as Hlaf the Woman orders in her Ship-Book. Once when we were thus stripped, and the ship lay propped on her keel, the

bird cried, "Out swords!" as though she saw an enemy. Witta vowed he would wring her neck.'

'Poor Polly! Did he?' said Una.

'Nay. She was the ship's bird. She could call all the rowers by name. . . . Those were good days—for a wifeless man—with Witta and his heathen—beyond the world's end. . . . After many weeks we came on the Great Shoal which stretched, as Witta's father had said, far out to sea. We skirted it till we were giddy with the sight and dizzy with the sound of bars and breakers; and when we reached land again we found a naked black people dwelling among woods, who for one wedge of iron loaded us with fruits and grasses and eggs. Witta scratched his head at them in sign he would buy gold. They had no gold, but they understood the sign (all the gold-traders hide their gold in their thick hair), for they pointed along the coast. They beat, too, on their chests with their clenched hands, and that, if we had known it, was an evil sign.'

'What did it mean?' said Dan.

'Patience. Ye shall hear. We followed the coast eastward sixteen days (counting time by sword-cuts on the helm-rail) till we came to the Forest in the Sea. Trees grew out of mud, arched upon lean and high roots, and many muddy waterways ran allwhither into darkness under the trees.

Here we lost the sun. We followed the winding channels between the trees, and where we could not row we laid hold of the crusted roots and hauled ourselves along. The water was foul, and great glittering flies tormented us. Morning and evening a blue mist covered the mud, which bred fevers. Four of our rowers sickened, and were bound to their benches, lest they should leap overboard and be eaten by the monsters of the mud. The Yellow Man lay sick beside the Wise Iron, rolling his head and talking in his own tongue. Only the Bird throve. She sat on Witta's shoulder and screamed in that noisome, silent darkness. Yes; I think it was the silence we feared.'

He paused to listen to the comfortable home noises of the brook.

'When we had lost count of time among those black gullies and swashes, we heard, as it were, a drum beat far off, and following it we broke into a broad, brown river by a hut in a clearing among fields of pumkins. We thanked God to see the sun again. The people of the village gave the good welcome, and Witta scratched his head at them (for gold), and showed them our iron and beads. They ran to the bank—we were still in the ship—and pointed to our swords and bows, for always when near shore we lay armed. Soon they fetched store of gold in bars and in dust from their huts, and some great blackened elephant teeth. These

they piled on the bank, as though to tempt us, and made signs of dealing blows in battle, and pointed up to the tree tops and to the forest behind. Their captain or chief sorcerer then beat on his chest with his fists and gnashed his teeth.

'Said Thorkild of Borkum: "Do they mean we must fight for all this gear?" and he half drew his sword.

'"Nay," said Hugh. "I think they ask us to league against some enemy."

'"I like this not," said Witta, of a sudden. "Back into midstream."

So we did, and sat still all, watching the black folk and the gold they piled on the bank. Again we heard drums beat in the forest, and the people fled to their huts, leaving the gold unguarded.

'Then Hugh, at the bows, pointed without speech, and we saw a great Devil come out of the forest. He shaded his brows with his hand, and moistened his pink tongue between his lips—thus.'

'A Devil!' said Dan, delightfully horrified.

'Yea. Taller than a man, covered with reddish hair. When he had well regarded our ship, he beat on his chest with his fists till it sounded like rolling drums, and came to the bank swinging all his body between his long arms, and gnashed his teeth at us. Hugh loosed arrow, and pierced him through the throat. He fell roaring, and three

other Devils ran out of the forest and hauled him into a tall tree out of sight. Anon they cast down the blood-stained arrow, and lamented together among the leaves. Witta saw the gold on the bank; he was loath to leave it. "Sirs," said he (no man had spoken till then), "yonder is that we have come so far and so painfully to find, laid out to our very hand. Let us row in while these Devils bewail themselves, and at least bear off what we may."

'Bold as a wolf, cunning as a fox was Witta! He set four archers on the foredeck to shoot the Devils if they should leap from the tree, which was close to the bank. He manned ten oars a side, and bade them watch his hand to row in or back out, and so coaxed he them toward the bank. But none would set foot ashore, though the gold was within ten paces. No man is hasty to his hanging. They whimpered at their oars like beaten hounds, and Witta bit his fingers for rage.

'Said Hugh of a sudden, "Hark!" At first we thought it was the buzzing of the glittering flies on the water, but it grew loud and fierce, so that all men heard.'

'What?' said Dan and Una.

'It was the sword.' Sir Richard patted the smooth hilt. 'It sang as a Dane sings before battle. "I go," said Hugh, and he leaped from the bows and fell among the gold. I was afraid to my

four bones' marrow, but for shame's sake I followed, and Thorkild of Borkum leaped after me. None other came. "Blame me not," cried Witta behind us, "I must abide by my ship." We three had no time to blame or praise. We stooped to the gold and threw it back over our shoulders, one hand on our swords and one eye on the tree, which nigh overhung us.

'I know not how the Devils leaped down, or how the fight began. I heard Hugh cry: "Out! out!" as though he were at Santlache again; I saw Thorkild's steel cap smitten off his head by a great hairy hand, and I felt an arrow from the ship whistle past my ear. They say that till Witta took his sword to the rowers he could not bring his ship in shore; and each one of the four archers said afterwards that he alone had pierced the Devil that fought me. I do not know. I went to it in my mail-shirt, which saved my skin. With long-sword and belt-dagger I fought for the life against a Devil whose very feet were hands, and who whirled me back and forth like a dead branch. He had me by the waist, my arms to my side, when an arrow from the ship pierced him between the shoulders, and he loosened grip. I passed my sword twice through him, and he crutched himself away between his long arms, coughing and moaning. Next, as I remember, I saw Thorkild of Borkum bare-headed and smiling, leaping up and

down before a Devil that leaped and gnashed his teeth. Then Hugh passed, his sword shifted to his left hand, and I wondered why I had not known that Hugh was a left-handed man; and thereafter I remembered nothing till I felt spray on my face, and we were in sunshine on the open sea. That was twenty days after.'

'What had happened? Did Hugh die?' the children asked.

'Never was such a fight fought by christened man,' said Sir Richard. 'An arrow from the ship had saved me from my Devil, and Thorkild of Borkum had given back before his Devil, till the bowmen on the ship could shoot it all full of arrows from near by; but Hugh's Devil was cunning, and had kept behind trees, where no arrow could reach. Body to body there, by stark strength of sword and hand, had Hugh slain him, and, dying, the Thing had clenched his teeth on the sword. Judge what teeth they were!'

Sir Richard turned the sword again that the children might see the two great chiseled gouges on either side of the blade.

'Those same teeth met in Hugh's right arm and side,' Sir Richard went on. 'I? Oh, I had no more than a broken foot and a fever. Thorkild's ear was bitten, but Hugh's arm and side clean withered away. I saw him where he lay along, sucking a fruit in his left hand. His flesh was wasted

off his bones, his hair was patched with white, and his hand was blue-veined like a woman's. He put his left hand round my neck and whispered, "Take my sword. It has been thine since Hastings, O, my brother, but I can never hold hilt again." We lay there on the high deck talking of Santlache and, I think, of every day since Santlache, and it came so that we both wept. I was weak, and he little more than a shadow.

'"Nay — nay," said Witta, at the helmrail. "Gold is a good right arm to any man. Look— look at the gold!" He bade Thorkild show us the gold and the elephant's teeth, as though we had been children. He had brought away all the gold on the bank, and twice as much more, that the people of the village gave him for slaying the Devils. They worshipped us as gods, Thorkild told me: it was one of their old women healed up Hugh's poor arm.'

'How much gold did you get?' asked Dan.

'How can I say? Where we came out with wedges of iron under the rowers' feet we returned with wedges of gold hidden beneath planks. There was dust of gold in packages where we slept; and along the side and crosswise under the benches we lashed the blackened elephants' teeth.

'"I had sooner have my right arm," said Hugh, when he had seen all.

'"Ahai! That was my fault," said Witta.

"I should have taken ransom and landed you in France when first you came aboard, ten months ago."

'"It is over-late now," said Hugh, laughing.

'Witta plucked at his long shoulder-lock. "But think!" said he. "If I had let ye go—which I swear I would never have done, for I love ye more than brothers—if I had let ye go, by now ye might have been horribly slain by some mere Moor in the Duke of Burgundy's war, or ye might have been murdered by land-thieves, or ye might have died of the plague at an inn. Think of this and do not blame me overmuch, Hugh. See! I will only take a half of the gold."

'"I blame thee not at all, Witta," said Hugh. "It was a joyous venture, and we thirty-five here have done what never men have done. If I live till England, I will build me a stout keep over Dallington out of my share."

'"I will buy cattle and amber and warm red cloth for the wife," said Witta, "and I will hold all the land at the head of Stavanger Fiord. Many will fight for me now. But first we must turn North, and with this honest treasure aboard I pray we meet no pirate ships."

'We did not laugh. We were careful. We were afraid lest we should lose one grain of our gold for which we had fought Devils.

'"Where is the Sorcerer?" said I, for Witta

was looking at the Wise Iron in the box, and I could not see the Yellow Man.

'"He has gone to his own country," said he. "He rose up in the night while we were beating out of that forest in the mud, and said that he could see it behind the trees. He leaped out on to the mud, and did not answer when we called; so we called no more. He left the Wise Iron, which is all that I care for—and see, the Spirit still points to the South!"

'We were troubled for fear that the Wise Iron should fail us now that its Yellow Man had gone, and when we saw the Spirit still served us we grew afraid of too strong winds, and of shoals, and of careless leaping fish, and of all the people on all the shores where we landed.'

'Why?' said Dan.

'Because of the gold—because of our gold. Gold changes men altogether. Thorkild of Borkum did not change. He laughed at Witta for his fears, and at us for our counselling Witta to furl sail when the ship pitched at all.

'"Better be drowned out of hand," said Thorkild of Borkum, "than go tied to a deck-load of yellow dust."

'He was a landless man, and had been slave to some King in the East. He would have beaten out the gold into deep bands to put round the oars, and round the prow.

'Yet, though he vexed himself for the gold, Witta waited upon Hugh like a woman, lending him his shoulder when the ship rolled, and tying of ropes from side to side that Hugh might hold by them. But for Hugh, he said—and so did all his men—they would never have won the gold. I remember Witta made a little, thin gold ring for our Bird to swing in. Three months we rowed and sailed and went ashore for fruits or to clean the ship. When we saw wild horsemen, riding among sand-dunes, flourishing spears, we knew we were on the Moors' coast, and stood over north to Spain; and a strong south-west wind bore us in ten days to a coast of high red rocks, where we heard a hunting-horn blow among the yellow gorse and knew it was England.

'"Now find ye Pevensey yourselves," said Witta. "I love not these narrow ship-filled seas."

'He set the dried, salted head of the Devil, which Hugh had killed, high on our prow, and all boats fled from us. Yet, for our gold's sake, we were more afraid than they. We crept along the coast by night till we came to the chalk cliffs, and so east to Pevensey. Witta would not come ashore with us, though Hugh promised him wine at Dallington enough to swim in. He was on fire to see his wife, and ran into the Marsh after sunset, and there he left us and our share of gold, and backed out on the same tide. He made no prom-

ise; he swore no oath; he looked for no thanks; but to Hugh, an armless man, and to me, an old cripple whom he could have flung into the sea, he passed over wedge upon wedge, packet upon packet of gold and dust of gold, and only ceased when we would take no more. As he stooped from the rail to bid us farewell he stripped off his right-arm bracelets and put them all on Hugh's left, and he kissed Hugh on the cheek. I think when Thorkild of Borkum bade the rowers give way we were near weeping. It is true that Witta was an heathen and a pirate; true it is he held us by force many months in his ship, but I loved that bow-legged, blue-eyed man for his great boldness, his cunning, his skill, and, beyond all, for his simplicity.'

'Did he get home all right?' said Dan.

'I never knew. We saw him hoist sail under the moon-track and stand away. I have prayed that he found his wife and the children.'

'And what did you do?'

'We waited on the Marsh till the day. Then I sat by the gold, all tied in an old sail, while Hugh went to Pevensey, and De Aquila sent us horses.'

Sir Richard crossed hands on his sword-hilt, and stared down stream through the soft warm shadows.

'A whole shipload of gold!' said Una, looking

at the little *Golden Hind*. 'But I'm glad I didn't see the Devils.'

'I don't believe they were devils.' Dan whispered back.

'Eh?' said Sir Richard. 'Witta's father warned him they were unquestionable Devils. One must believe one's father, and not one's children. What were my Devils, then?'

Dan flushed all over, 'I—I only thought,' he stammered; 'I've got a book called *The Gorilla Hunters*—it's a continuation of *Coral Island*, sir—and it says there that the Gorillas (they're big monkeys you know) were always chewing iron up.'

'Not always,' said Una. 'Only twice.' They had been reading *The Gorilla Hunters* in the orchard.

'Well, anyhow, they always drummed on their chests, like Sir Richard's did, before they went for people. And they built houses in trees, too.'

'Ah!' Sir Richard opened his eyes. 'Houses like flat nests did our Devils make, where their imps lay and looked at us. I did not see them (I was sick after the fight), but Witta told me and, lo, ye know it also. Wonderful! Were our Devils only nest-building apes? Is there no sorcery left in the world?'

'I don't know,' answered Dan, uncomfortably. 'I've seen a man take rabbits out of a hat, and he

told us we could see how he did it, if we watched hard. And we did.'

'But we didn't,' said Una sighing. 'Oh! there's Puck!'

The little fellow, brown and smiling, peered between two stems of an ash, nodded, and slid down the bank into the cool beside them.

'No sorcery, Sir Richard?' he laughed, and blew on a full dandelion head he had picked.

'They tell me that Witta's Wise Iron was a toy. The boy carries such an Iron with him. They tell me our Devils were apes, called gorillas!' said Sir Richard, indignantly.

'That is the sorcery of books,' said Puck. 'I warned thee they were wise children. All people can be wise by reading of books.'

'But are the books true?' Sir Richard frowned. 'I like not all this reading and writing.'

'Ye-es,' said Puck, holding the naked dandelion head at arm's length. 'But if we hang all fellows who write falsely, why did De Aquila not begin with Gilbert, the Clerk? *He* was false enough.'

'Poor false Gilbert. Yet in his fashion, he was bold,' said Sir Richard.

'What did he do?' said Dan.

'He wrote,' said Sir Richard. 'Is the tale meet for children, think you?' He looked at Puck; but, 'Tell us! Tell us!' cried Dan and Una together.

THORKILD'S SONG

There is no wind along these seas,
Out oars for Stavanger!
Forward all for Stavanger!
So we must wake the white-ash breeze,
Let fall for Stavanger!
A long pull for Stavanger!

Oh, hear the benches creak and strain!
(A long pull for Stavanger!)
She thinks she smells the Northland rain!
(A long pull for Stavanger!)

She thinks she smells the Northland snow,
And she's as glad as we to go!

She thinks she smells the Northland rime,
And the dear dark nights of winter-time.

Her very bolts are sick for shore,
And we—we want it ten times more!

Ho—all you Gods that love brave men,
Send us a three-reef gale again!

Send us a gale, and watch us come,
With close-cropped canvas slashing home!

But—*there's no wind in all these seas,*
A long pull for Stavanger!
So we must wake the white-ash breeze,
A long pull for Stavanger!

OLD MEN AT PEVENSEY

OLD MEN AT PEVENSEY

'IT has nought to do with apes or devils,' Sir Richard went on, in an undertone. 'It concerns De Aquila, than whom there was never bolder nor craftier, nor more hardy knight born. And, remember, he was an old, old man at that time.'

'When?' said Dan.

'When we came back from sailing with Witta.'

'What did you do with your gold?' said Dan.

'Have patience. Link by link is chain-mail made. I will tell all in its place. We bore the gold to Pevensey on horseback—three loads of it—and then up to the north chamber, above the Great Hall of Pevensey Castle, where De Aquila lay in winter. He sat on his bed like a little white falcon, turning his head swiftly from one to the other as we told our tale. Jehan the Crab, an old sour man-at-arms, guarded the stairway, but De Aquila bade him wait at the stair-foot, and let down both leather curtains over the door. It was Jehan whom De Aquila had sent to us with the horses, and only Jehan had loaded the gold. When our story was told, De Aquila gave us the news

of England, for we were as men waked from a year-long sleep. The Red King was dead—slain (ye remember?) the day we set sail—and Henry, his younger brother, had made himself King of England over the head of Robert of Normandy. This was the very thing that the Red King had done to Robert when our Great William died. Then Robert of Normandy, mad, as De Aquila said, at twice missing of this kingdom, had sent an army against England, which army had been well beaten back to their ships at Portsmouth. A little earlier, and Witta's ship would have rowed through them.

'"And now," said De Aquila, "half the great Barons of the north and west are out against the King between Salisbury and Shrewsbury; and half the other half wait to see which way the game shall go. They say Henry is overly English for their stomachs, because he hath married an English wife and she hath coaxed him to give back their old laws to our Saxons. (Better ride a horse on the bit he knows, *I* say.) But that is only a cloak to their falsehood." He cracked his finger on the table where the wine was spilt, and thus he spoke:—

'"William crammed us Norman barons full o' good English acres after Santlache. *I* had my share too," he said, and clapped Hugh on the shoulders; but I warned him—I warned him be-

fore Odo rebelled—that he should have bidden the Barons give up their lands and lordships in Normandy if they would be English lords. Now they are all but princes both in England and Normandy—trencherfed hounds, with a foot in one trough and both eyes on the other! Robert of Normandy has sent them word that if they do not fight for him in England he will sack and harry out their lands in Normandy. Therefore Clare has risen, Fitz Osborn has risen, Montgomery has risen—whom our first William made an English earl. Even D'Arcy is out with his men, whose father I remember a little hedge-sparrow knight nearby Caen. If Henry wins, the Barons can still flee to Normandy, where Robert will welcome them. If Henry loses, Robert, he says, will give them more lands in England. Oh, a pest—a pest on Normandy, for she will be our England's curse this many a long year!"

'"Amen," said Hugh. "But will the war come our ways, think you?"

'"Not from the North," said De Aquila. "But the sea is always open. If the Barons gain the upper hand Robert will send another army into England for sure; and this time I think he will land here—where his father, the Conqueror, landed. Ye have brought your pigs to a pretty market! Half England alight, and gold enough on the ground"—he stamped on the bars beneath the

table—"to set every sword in Christendom fighting."

'"What is to do?" said Hugh. "I have no keep at Dallington; and if we buried it, whom could we trust?"

'"Me," said De Aquila. "Pevensey walls are strong. No man but Jehan, who is my dog, knows what is between them." He drew a curtain by the shot-window and showed us the shaft of a well in the thickness of the wall.

'"I made it for a drinking-well," he said, "but we found salt water, and it rises and falls with the tide. Hark! We heard the water whistle and blow at the bottom. "Will it serve?" said he.

'"Needs must," said Hugh. "Our lives are in thy hands." So we lowered all the gold down except one small chest of it by De Aquila's bed, which we kept as much for his delight in its weight and colour as for any of our needs.

'In the morning, ere we rode to our Manors, he said: "I do not say farewell; because ye will return and bide here. Not for love nor for sorrow, but to be with the gold. Have a care," he said, laughing, "lest I use it to make myself Pope. Trust me not, but return!"'

Sir Richard paused and smiled sadly.

'In seven days, then, we returned from our Manors—from the Manors which had been ours.'

'And were the children quite well?' said Una.

'My sons were young. Land and governance belong by right to young men.' Sir Richard was talking to himself. 'It would have broken their hearts if we had taken back our Manors. They made us great welcome, but we could see—Hugh and I could see—that our day was done. I was a cripple and he a one-armed man. No!' He shook his head. 'And therefore'—he raised his voice—'we rode back to Pevensey.'

'I'm sorry,' said Una, for the knight seemed very sorrowful.

'Little maid, it all passed long ago. They were young; we were old. We let them rule the Manors. "Aha!" cried De Aquila from his shot-window, when we dismounted. "Back again to earth, old foxes?" but when we were in his chamber above the hall he puts his arms about us and says, "Welcome, ghosts! Welcome, poor ghosts!" . . . Thus it fell out that we were rich beyond belief, and lonely. And lonely!'

'What did you do?' said Dan.

'We watched for Robert of Normandy,' said the knight. 'De Aquila was like Witta. He suffered no idleness. In fair weather we would ride along between Bexlei on the one side, to Cuckmere on the other—sometimes with hawk, sometimes with hound (there are stout hares both on the Marsh and the Downland) but always with an eye to the sea, for fear of fleets from Normandy. In foul

weather he would walk on the top of his tower, frowning against the rain—peering here and pointing there. It always vexed him to think how Witta's ship had come and gone without his knowledge. When the wind ceased and ships anchored, to the wharf's edge he would go and, leaning on his sword among the stinking fish, would call to the mariners for their news from France. His other eye he kept landward for word of Henry's war against the Barons.

'Many brought him news—jongleurs, harpers, pedlers, sutlers, priests, and the like; and, though he was secret enough in small things, yet, if their news misliked him, then, regarding neither time nor place nor people, would he curse our King Henry for a fool or a babe. I have heard him cry aloud by the fishing-boats: "If I were King of England I would do thus and thus"; and when I rode out to see that the warning-beacons were laid and dry, he hath often called to me from the shot-window: "Look to it, Richard! Do not copy our blind King, but see with thine own eyes, and feel with thine own hands." I do not think he knew any sort of fear. And so we lived at Pevensey, in the little chamber above the hall.

'One foul night came word that a messenger of the King waited below. We were chilled after a long riding in the fog towards Bexlei, which is an easy place for ships to land. De Aquila sent word

the man might either eat with us or wait till we had fed. Anon Jehan, at the stair-head, cried that he had called for horse, and was gone. "Pest on him!" said De Aquila. "I have more to do than to shiver in the Great Hall for every gadling the King sends. Left he no word?"

'"None," said Jehan, "except"—he had been with De Aquila at Santlache—"except he said that if an old dog could not learn new tricks it was time to sweep out the kennel."

'"Oho!" said De Aquila, rubbing his nose, "to whom did he say that?"

'"To his beard, chiefly, but some to his horse's flank as he was girthing up. I followed him out," said Jehan the Crab.

'"What was his shield-mark?"

'"Gold horseshoes on black," said the Crab.

'"That is one of Fulke's men," said De Aquila.'

Puck broke in very gently, 'Gold horseshoes on black is *not* the Fulkes' shield. The Fulkes' arms are——'

The knight waved one hand statelily.

'Thou knowest that evil man's true name,' he replied, 'but I have chosen to call him Fulke because I promised him I would not tell the story of his wickedness so that any man might guess it. I have changed *all* the names in my tale. His children's children may be still alive.'

'True—true,' said Puck, smiling softly. 'It is knightly to keep faith—even after a thousand years.'

Sir Richard bowed a little and went on:—

'"Gold horseshoes on black?" said De Aquila. "I had heard Fulke had joined the Barons, but if this is true our King must be of the upper hand. No matter, all Fulkes are faithful. Still, I would not have sent the man away empty."

'"He fed," said Jehan. "Gilbert the Clerk fetched him meat and wine from the kitchens. He ate at Gilbert's table."

'This Gilbert was a clerk from Battle Abbey, who kept the accounts of the Manor of Pevensey. He was tall and pale-coloured, and carried those new-fashioned beads for counting of prayers. They were large brown nuts or seeds, and hanging from his girdle with his penner and ink horn they clashed when he walked. His place was in the great fireplace. There was his table of accounts, and there he lay o' nights. He feared the hounds in the Hall that came nosing after bones or to sleep on the warm ashes, and would slash at them with his beads—like a woman. When De Aquila sat in Hall to do justice, take fines, or grant lands, Gilbert would so write it in the Manor-roll. But it was none of his work to feed our guests, or to let them depart without his lord's knowledge.

'Said De Aquila, after Jehan was gone down

the stair: "Hugh, has thou ever told my Gilbert thou canst read Latin hand-of-write?"

'"No," said Hugh. "He is no friend to me, or to Odo my hound either." "No matter," said De Aquila. "Let him never know thou canst tell one letter from its fellow, and"—here he jerked us in the ribs with his scabbard—"watch him both of ye. There be devils in Africa, as I have heard, but by the Saints there be greater devils in Pevensey!" And that was all he would say.

'It chanced, some small while afterwards, a Norman man-at-arms would wed a Saxon wench of the Manor, and Gilbert (we had watched him well since De Aquila spoke) doubted whether her folk were free or slave. Since De Aquila would give them a field of good land, if she were free, the matter came up at the justice in Great Hall before De Aquila. First the wench's father spoke; then her mother; then all together, till the hall rang and the hounds bayed. De Aquila held up his hands. "Write her free," he called to Gilbert by the fireplace. "A' God's Name write her free, before she deafens me! Yes, yes," he said to the wench that was on her knees at him; "Thou art Cerdic's sister, and own cousin to the Lady of Mercia, if thou wilt be silent. In fifty years there will be neither Norman nor Saxon, but all English," said he, "and *these* are the men that do our work!" He clapped the man-at-arms, that was Jehan's nephew,

on the shoulder, and kissed the wench, and fretted with his feet among the rushes to show it was finished. (The Great Hall is always bitter cold.) I stood at his side; Hugh was behind Gilbert in the fireplace making to play with wise rough Odo. He signed to De Aquila, who bade Gilbert measure the new field for the new couple. Out then runs our Gilbert between man and maid, his beads clashing at his waist, and the Hall being empty, we three sit by the fire.

'Said Hugh, leaning down to the hearthstones, "I saw this stone move under Gilbert's foot when Odo snuffed at it. Look!" De Aquila digged in the ashes with his sword; the stone tilted; beneath it lay a parchment folden, and the writing atop was: "Words spoken against the King by our Lord of Pevensey—the second part."

'Here was set out (Hugh read it us whispering) every jest De Aquila had made to us touching the King; every time he had called out to me from the shot-window, and every time he had said what he would do if he were King of England. Yes, day by day had his daily speech, which he never stinted, been set down by Gilbert, tricked out and twisted from its true meaning, yet withal so cunningly that none could deny who knew him that De Aquila had in some sort spoken those words. Ye see?'

Dan and Una nodded.

'Yes,' said Una, gravely. 'It isn't what you say so much. It's what you mean when you say it. Like calling Dan a beast in fun. Only grown-ups don't always understand.'

'"He hath done this day by day before our very face?" said De Aquila.

'"Nay, hour by hour," said Hugh. "When De Aquila spoke even now, in the hall, of Saxons and Normans, I saw Gilbert write on a parchment, which he kept beside the Manor-roll, that De Aquila said soon there would be no Normans left in England if his men-at-arms did their work aright."

'"Bones of the Saints!" said De Aquila. "What avail is honour or a sword against a pen? Where did Gilbert hide that writing? He shall eat it."

'"In his breast when he ran out," said Hugh. "Which made me look to see where he kept his finished stuff. When Odo scratched at this stone here, I saw his face change. So I was sure."

'"He is bold," said De Aquila. "Do him justice. In his own fashion, my Gilbert is bold."

'"Overbold," said Hugh. "Hearken here," and he read: "Upon the feast of St. Agatha, our Lord of Pevensey, lying in his upper chamber, being clothed in his second fur gown reversed with rabbit——"

'"Pest on him! He is not my tire-woman!" said De Aquila, and Hugh and I laughed.

'"Reversed with rabbit, seeing a fog over the

marshes, did wake Sir Richard Dalyngridge, his drunken cup-mate" (here they laughed at me) "and said, 'Peer out, old fox, for God is on the Duke of Normandy's side.'"

'"So did I. It was a black fog. Robert could have landed ten thousand men, and we none the wiser. Does he tell how we were out all day riding the marsh, and how I near perished in a quicksand, and coughed like a sick ewe for ten days after?" cried De Aquila.

'"No," said Hugh. "But here is the prayer of Gilbert himself to his master Fulke."

'"Ah," said De Aquila. "Well I knew it was Fulke. What is the price of my blood?"

'"Gilbert prayeth that when our Lord of Pevensey is stripped of his lands on this evidence which Gilbert hath, with fear and pains, collected——"

'"Fear and pains is a true word," said De Aquila, and sucked in his cheeks. "But how excellent a weapon is a pen! I must learn it."

'"He prays that Fulke will advance him from his present service to that honour in the Church which Fulke promised him. And lest Fulke should forget, he has written below, 'To be Sacristan of Battle.'"

'At this De Aquila whistled. "A man who can plot against one lord can plot against another. When I am stripped of my lands Fulke will whip

off my Gilbert's foolish head. None the less Battle needs a new Sacristan. They tell me the Abbot Henry keeps no sort of rule there."

'"Let the Abbot wait," said Hugh. "It is our heads and our lands that are in danger. This parchment is the second part of the tale. The first has gone to Fulke, and so to the King, who will hold us traitors."

'"Assuredly," said De Aquila. "Fulke's man took the first part that evening when Gilbert fed him, and our King is so beset by his brother and his Barons (small blame, too!) that he is mad with mistrust. Fulke has his ear, and pours poison into it. Presently the King gives him my land and yours. This is old," and he leaned back and yawned.

'"And thou wilt surrender Pevensey without word or blow?" said Hugh. "We Saxons will fight your King then. I will go warn my nephew at Dallington. Give me a horse!"

'"Give thee a toy and a rattle," said De Aquila. "Put back the parchment, and rake over the ashes. If Fulke is given my Pevensey which is England's gate, what will he do with it? He is Norman at heart, and his heart is in Normandy, where he can kill peasants at his pleasure. He will open England's gate to our sleepy Robert, as Odo and Mortain tried to do, and then there will be another landing and another Santlache. Therefore I cannot give up Pevensey."

'"Good," said we two.

'"Ah, but wait! If my King be made, on Gilbert's evidence, to mistrust me, he will send his men against me here, and while we fight, England's gate is left unguarded. Who will be the first to come through thereby? Even Robert of Normandy. Therefore I cannot fight my King." He nursed his sword—thus.

'"This is saying and unsaying like a Norman," said Hugh. "What of our Manors?"

'"I do not think for myself," said De Aquila, "nor for our King, nor for your lands. I think for England, for whom neither King nor Baron thinks. I am not Norman, Sir Richard, nor Saxon, Sir Hugh. English am I."

'"Saxon, Norman, or English," said Hugh, "our lives are thine, however the game goes. When do we hang Gilbert?"

'"Never," said De Aquila. "Who knows he may yet be Sacristan of Battle, for, to do him justice, he is good writer. Dead men make dumb witnesses. Wait."

'"But the King may give Pevensey to Fulke. And our Manors go with it," said I. "Shall we tell our sons?"

'"No. The King will not wake up a hornet's nest in the South till he has smoked out the bees in the North. He may hold me a traitor; but at least he sees I am not fighting against him, and

every day that I lie still is so much gain to him while he fights the Barons. If he were wise he would wait till that war were over before he made new enemies. But I think Fulke will play upon him to send for me, and if I do not obey the summons that will, to Henry's mind, be proof of my treason. But mere talk, such as Gilbert sends, is no proof nowadays. We Barons follow the Church, and, like Anselm, we speak what we please. Let us go about our day's dealings, and say nought to Gilbert."

'"Then we do nothing," said Hugh.

'"We wait," said De Aquila. "I am old, but still I find that the most grievous work I know."

'And so we found it, but in the end De Aquila was right.

'A little later in the year, armed men rode over the hill, the Golden Horseshoes flying behind the King's banner. Said De Aquila, at the window of our chamber: "How did I tell you? Here comes Fulke himself to spy out his new lands which our King hath promised him if he can bring proof of my treason."

'"How dost thou know?" said Hugh.

'"Because that is what I would do if I were Fulke, but *I* should have brought more men. My roan horse to your old shoes," said he, "Fulke brings me the King's Summons to leave Pevensey

and join the war." He sucked in his cheeks and drummed on the edge of the shaft, where the water sounded all hollow.

'"Shall we go?" said I.

'"Go! At this time of year? Stark madness," said he. "Take *me* from Pevensey to fisk and flyte through fern and forest, and in three days Robert's keels would be lying on Pevensey mud with ten thousand men! Who would stop them —Fulke?"

'The horns blew without, and anon Fulke cried the King's Summons at the great door that De Aquila with all men and horse should join the King's camp at Salisbury.

'"How did I tell you?" said De Aquila. "There are twenty Barons 'twixt here and Salisbury could give King Henry good land-service, but he has been worked upon by Fulke to send south and call me—*me!*—off the Gate of England, when his enemies stand about to batter it in. See that Fulke's men lie in the big south barn," said he. "Give them drink, and when Fulke has eaten we will drink in my chamber. The Great Hall is too cold for old bones."

'As soon as he was off-horse Fulke went to the chapel with Gilbert to give thanks for his safe coming, and when he had eaten—he was a fat man, and rolled his eyes greedily at our good roast Sussex wheatears—we led him to the little upper

chamber, whither Gilbert had already gone with the Manor-roll. I remember when Fulke heard the tide blow and whistle in the shaft he leaped back, and his long down-turned stirrup-shoes caught in the rushes and he stumbled, so that Jehan behind him found it easy to knock his head against the wall.'

'Did you know it was going to happen?' said Dan.

'Assuredly,' said Sir Richard, with a sweet smile. 'I put my foot on his sword and plucked away his dagger, but he knew not whether it was day or night for a while. He lay rolling his eyes and bubbling with his mouth, and Jehan roped him like a calf. He was cased all in that new-fangled armour which we call lizard-mail. Not rings like my hauberk here'—Sir Richard tapped his chest—'but little pieces of dagger-proof steel overlapping on stout leather. We stripped it off (no need to spoil good harness by wetting it), and in the neck-piece De Aquila found the same folden piece of parchment which we had put back under the hearthstone.

'At this Gilbert would have run out. I laid my hand on his shoulder. It sufficed. He fell to trembling and praying on his beads.

'"Gilbert," said De Aquila, "here be more notable sayings and doings of our Lord of Pevensey for thee to write down. Take penner and

inkhorn, Gilbert. We cannot all be Sacristans of Battle."

'Said Fulke from the floor, "Ye have bound a King's messenger. Pevensey shall burn for this!"

'"Maybe. I have seen it besieged once," said De Aquila, "but heart up, Fulke. I promise thee that thou shalt be hanged in the middle of the flames at the end of that siege, if I have to share my last loaf with thee, and that is more than Odo would have done when we starved out him and Mortain."

'Then Fulke sat up and looked long and cunningly at De Aquila.

'"By the Saints," said he, "why didst thou not say thou wast on the Duke's side at the first?"

'"Am I?" said De Aquila.

'Fulke laughed and said, "No man who serves King Henry dare do this much to his messenger. When didst thou come over to the Duke. Let me up and we can smooth it out together." And he smiled and becked and winked.

'"Yes, we will smooth it out," said De Aquila. He nodded to me, and Jehan and I heaved up Fulke—he was a heavy man—and lowered him into the shaft by a rope, not so as to stand on our gold, but dangling by his shoulders a little above. It was turn of ebb, and the water came to his

knees. He said nothing, but shivered somewhat.

'Then Jehan of a sudden beat down Gilbert's wrist with his sheathed dagger, "Stop!" he said. "He swallows his beads."

'"Poison, belike," said De Aquila. "It is good for men who know too much. I have carried it these thirty years. Give me!"

'Then Gilbert wept and howled. De Aquila ran the beads through his fingers. The last one—I have said they were large nuts—opened in two halves on a pin and there was a small folded parchment within. On it was written; "*The Old Dog goes to Salisbury to be beaten. I have his Kennel. Come quickly.*"

'"This is worse than poison," said De Aquila, very softly, and sucked in his cheeks. Then Gilbert grovelled in the rushes, and told us all he knew. The letter, as we guessed, was from Fulke to the Duke (and not the first that had passed between them); Fulke had given it to Gilbert in the chapel, and Gilbert thought to have taken it by morning to a certain fishing-boat at the wharf, which trafficked between Pevensey and the French shore. Gilbert was a false fellow, but he found time between his quakings and shakings to swear that the master of the boat knew nothing of the matter.

'"He hath called me shaved head," said Gil-

bert, "and he hath thrown haddock-guts at me, but for all that, he is no traitor."

'"I will have no clerk of mine mishandled or miscalled," said De Aquila. "That seaman shall be whipped at his own mast. Write me first a letter, and thou shalt bear it, with the order for the whipping, to-morrow to the boat."

'At this Gilbert would have kissed De Aquila's hand—he had not hoped to live until the morning—and when he trembled less he wrote a letter as from Fulke to the Duke saying that the Kennel, which signified Pevensey, was shut, and that the Old Dog (which was De Aquila) sat outside it, and, moreover, that all had been betrayed.

'"Write to any man that all is betrayed," said De Aquila, "and even the Pope himself would sleep uneasily. Eh, Jehan? If one told thee all was betrayed, what wouldst thou do?"

'"I would run away," said Jehan. "It might be true."

'"Well said," quoth De Aquila. "Write, Gilbert, that Montgomery, the great Earl, hath made his peace with the King, and that little D'Arcy, whom I hate, hath been hanged by the heels. We will give Robert full measure to chew upon. Write also that Fulke himself is sick to death of a dropsy."

'"Nay?" cried Fulke, hanging in the well-shaft. "Drown me out of hand, but do not make a jest of me."

'"Jest? I?" said De Aquila. "I am but fighting for life and lands with a pen, as thou hast shown me, Fulke."

'Then Fulke groaned, for he was cold, and, "Let me confess," said he.

'"Now, this is right neighbourly," said De Aquila, leaning over the shaft. "Thou hast read my sayings and doings—or at least the first part of them—and thou art minded to repay me with thy own doings and sayings. Take penner and inkhorn, Gilbert. Here is work that will not irk thee."

'"Let my men go without hurt, and I will confess my treason against the King," said Fulke.

'"Now, why has he grown so tender of his men of a sudden?" said Hugh to me; for Fulke had no name for mercy to his men. Plunder he gave them, but pity, none.

'"Té! Té!" said De Aquila. "Thy treason was all confessed long ago by Gilbert. It would be enough to hang Montgomery himself."

"Nay; but spare my men," said Fulke; and we heard him splash like a fish in a pond, for the tide was rising.

'"All in good time," said De Aquila. "The night is young; the wine is old; and we need only the merry tale. Begin the story of thy life since when thou wast a lad at Tours. Tell it nimbly!"

'"Ye shame me to my soul," said Fulke.

'"Then I have done what neither King nor Duke could do," said De Aquila. "But begin and forget nothing."

'"Send thy man away," said Fulke.

'"That much I can," said De Aquila. "But, remember, I am like the Danes' King; I cannot turn the tide."

'"How long will it rise?" said Fulke, and splashed anew.

'"For three hours," said De Aquila. "Time to tell all thy good deeds. Begin, and Gilbert—I have heard thou art somewhat careless—do not twist his words from their true meaning."

'So—fear of death in the dark being upon him—Fulke began; and Gilbert, not knowing what his fate might be, wrote it word by word. I have heard many tales, but never heard I aught to match the tale of Fulke, his black life, as Fulke told it hollowly, hanging in the shaft.'

'Was it bad?' said Dan, awestruck.

'Beyond belief,' Sir Richard answered. 'None the less, there was that in it which forced even Gilbert to laugh. We three laughed till we ached. At one place his teeth so chattered that we could not well hear, and we reached him down a cup of wine. Then he warmed to it, and smoothly set out all his shifts, malices, and treacheries, his extreme boldnesses (he was desperate bold); his retreats, shufflings, and counterfeitings (he was also inconceiv-

ably a coward); his lack of gear and honour; his despair at their loss; his remedies, and well-coloured contrivances. Yes, he waved the filthy rags of his life before us, as though they had been some proud banner. When he ceased, we saw by torches that the tide stood at the corners of his mouth, and he breathed strongly through his nose.

'We had him out, and rubbed him; we wrapped him in a cloak, and gave him wine, and we leaned and looked upon him the while he drank. He was shivering, but shameless.

'Of a sudden we heard Jehan at the stairway wake, but a boy pushed past him, and stood before us, the hall rushes in his hair, all slubbered with sleep. "My father! My father! I dreamed of treachery," he cried, and babbled thickly.

'"There is no treachery here," said Fulke. "Go," and the boy turned, even then not fully awake, and Jehan led him by the hand to the Great Hall.

'"Thy only son!" said De Aquila, "Why didst thou bring the child here?"

'"He is my heir. I dared not trust him to my brother," said Fulke, and now he was ashamed. De Aquila said nothing, but sat weighing a wine cup in his two hands—thus. Anon, Fulke touched him on the knee.

'"Let the boy escape to Normandy," said he, "and do with me at thy pleasure. Yea, hang me

to-morrow, with my letter to Robert round my neck, but let the boy go."

'"Be still," said De Aquila. "I think for England."

'So we waited what our Lord of Pevensey should devise; and the sweat ran down Fulke's forehead.

'At last said De Aquila: "I am too old to judge, or to trust any man. I do not covet thy lands, as thou hast coveted mine, and whether thou art any better or any worse than any other black Angevin thief, it is for thy King to find out. Therefore, go back to thy King, Fulke."

'"And thou wilt say nothing of what has passed?" said Fulke.

'"Why should I? Thy son will stay with me. If the King calls me again to leave Pevensey, which I must guard against England's enemies; if the King sends his men against me for a traitor; or if I hear that the King in his bed thinks any evil of me or my two knights, thy son will be hanged from out this window, Fulke."'

'But it hadn't anything to do with his son,' cried Una, startled.

'How could we have hanged Fulke?' said Sir Richard. 'We needed him to make our peace with the King. He would have betrayed half England for the boy's sake. Of that we were sure.'

'I don't understand,' said Una. 'But I think it was simply awful.'

'So did not Fulke. He was well pleased.'

'What? Because his son was going to be killed?'

'Nay. Because De Aquila had shown him how he might save the boy's life and his own lands and honours. "I will do it," he said: "I swear I will do it. I will tell the King thou art no traitor, but the most excellent, valiant, and perfect of us all. Yes, I will save thee."

De Aquila looked still into the bottom of the cup, rolling the wine-dregs to and fro.

'"Ay," he said. "If I had a son, I would, I think, save him. But do not by any means tell me how thou wilt go about it."

'"Nay, nay," said Fulke, nodding his bald head wisely. "That is my secret. But rest at ease, De Aquila, no hair of thy head nor rood of thy land shall be forfeited," and he smiled like one planning great good deeds.

'"And henceforward," said De Aquila, "I counsel thee to serve one master—not two."

'"What?" said Fulke. "Can I work no more honest trading between the two sides these troublous times?"

'"Serve Robert or the King—England or Normandy," said De Aquila. "I care not which it is, but make thy choice here and now."

'"The King, then," said Fulke, "for I see he is better served than Robert. Shall I swear it?"

'"No need," said De Aquila, and he laid his hand on the parchments which Gilbert had written. "It shall be some part of my Gilbert's penance to copy out the savory tale of thy life, till we have made ten, twenty, an hundred, maybe, copies. How many cattle, think you, would the Bishop of Tours give for that tale? Or thy brother? Or the Monks of Blois? Minstrels will turn it into songs which thy own Saxon serfs shall sing behind their plough-stilts, and men-at-arms riding through thy Norman towns. From here to Rome, Fulke, men will make very merry over that tale, and how Fulke told it, hanging in a well, like a drowned puppy. This shall be thy punishment, if ever I find thee double-dealing with thy King any more. Meantime, the parchments stay here with thy son. Him I will return to thee when thou hast made my peace with the King. The parchments never."

'Fulke hid his face and groaned.

'"Bones of the Saints!" said De Aquila, laughing. "The pen cuts deep. I could never have fetched that grunt out of thee with any sword."

'"But so long as I do not anger thee, my tale will be secret?" said Fulke.

'"Just so long. Does that comfort thee, Fulke?" said De Aquila.

'"What other comfort have ye left me?" he

said, and of a sudden he wept hopelessly, like a child, dropping his face on his knees.'

'Poor Fulke,' said Una.

'I pitied him also' said Sir Richard.

'"After the spur, corn," said De Aquila, and he threw Fulke three wedges of gold that he had taken from our little chest by the bed-place.

'"If I had known this," said Fulke, catching his breath, "I would never have lifted hand against Pevensey. Only lack of this yellow stuff has made me so unlucky in my dealings."

'It was dawn then, and they stirred in the Great Hall below. We sent down Fulke's mail to be scoured, and when he rode away at noon under his own and the King's banner very splendid and stately did he show. He smoothed his long beard, and called his son to his stirrup and kissed him. De Aquila rode with him as far as the New Mill landward. We thought the night had been all a dream.'

'But did he make it right with the King? Dan asked. 'About your not being traitors, I mean?'

Sir Richard smiled. 'The King sent no second summons to Pevensey, nor did he ask why De Aquila had not obeyed the first. Yes, that was Fulke's work. I know not how he did it, but it was well and swiftly done.'

'Then you didn't do anything to his son?' said Una.

'The boy? Oh, he was an imp. He turned the keep doors out of dortoirs while we had him. He sang foul songs, learned in the Barons' camps —poor fool; he set the hounds fighting in hall; he lit the rushes to drive out, as he said, the fleas; he drew his dagger on Jehan, who threw him down the stairway for it; and he rode his horse through crops and among sheep. But when we had beaten him, and showed him wolf and deer, he followed us old men like a young, eager hound, and called us "uncle." His father came the summer's end to take him away, but the boy had no lust to go, because of the otter-hunting, and he stayed on till the fox-hunting. I gave him a bittern's claw to bring him good luck at shooting. An imp, if ever there was!'

'And what happened to Gilbert?' said Dan.

'Not even a whipping. De Aquila said he would sooner a clerk, however false, that knew the Manor-roll than a fool, however true, that must be taught his work afresh. Moreover, after that night I think Gilbert loved as much as he feared De Aquila. At least he would not leave us—not even when Vivian, the King's Clerk, would have made him Sacristan of Battle Abbey. A false fellow, but, in his fashion, bold.'

'Did Robert ever land in Pevensey after all?' Dan went on.

'We guarded the coast too well while Henry

was fighting his Barons; and three or four years later, when England had peace, Henry crossed to Normandy and showed his brother some work at Tenchebrai that cured Robert of fighting. Many of Henry's men sailed from Pevensey to that war. Fulke came, I remember, and we all four lay in the little chamber once again, and drank together. De Aquila was right. One should not judge men. Fulke was merry. Yes, always merry—with a catch in his breath.'

'And what did you do afterwards?' said Una.

'We talked together of times past. That is all men can do when they grow old, little maid.'

The bell for tea rang faintly across the meadows. Dan lay in the bows of the *Golden Hind;* Una in the stern, the book of verses open in her lap, was reading from 'The Slave's Dream':—

> 'Again in the mist and shadow of sleep
> He saw his native land:'

'I don't know when you began that,' said Dan, sleepily.

On the middle thwart of the boat, beside Una's sun-bonnet, lay an Oak leaf, an Ash leaf, and a Thorn leaf, that must have dropped down from the trees above; and the brook giggled as though it had just seen some joke.

THE RUNES ON WELAND'S SWORD

A Smith makes me
To betray my Man
In my first fight.

To gather Gold
At the world's end
I am sent.

The Gold I gather
Comes into England
Out of deep Water.

Like a shining Fish
Then it descends
Into deep Water.

It is not given
For goods or gear.
But for The Thing.

The Gold I gather
A King covets
For an ill use

The Gold I gather
Is drawn up
Out of deep Water.

Like a shining Fish
Then it descends
Into deep Water.

It is not given
For goods or gear
But for The Thing.

A CENTURION OF THE THIRTIETH

Cities and Thrones and Powers,
Stand in Time's eye,
Almost as long as flowers,
Which daily die:
But, as new buds put forth,
To glad new men,
Out of the spent and unconsidered Earth,
The Cities rise again

This season's Daffodil,
She never hears,
What change, what chance, what chill,
Cut down last year's;
But with bold countenance,
And knowledge small,
Esteems her seven days' continuance
To be perpetual.

So Time that is o'er-kind,
To all that be,
Ordains us e'en as blind,
As bold as she:
That in our very death,
And burial sure,
Shadow to shadow, well-persuaded, saith,
'See how our works endure!'

A CENTURION OF THE THIRTIETH

DAN had come to grief over his Latin, and was kept in; so Una went alone to Far Wood. Dan's big catapult and the lead bullets that Hobden had made for him were hidden in an old hollow beech-stub on the west of the wood. They had named the place out of the verse in *Lays of Ancient Rome.*

> 'From lordly Volaterrae,
> Where scowls the far-famed hold,
> Piled by the hands of giants
> For Godlike Kings of old.'

They were the 'Godlike Kings,' and when old Hobden piled some comfortable brushwood between the big wooden knees of Volaterrae, they called him 'Hands of Giants.'

Una slipped through their private gap in the fence, and sat still a while, scowling as scowlily

and lordlily as she knew how; for 'Volaterrae' is an important watch-tower that juts out of Far Wood just as Far Wood juts out of the hillside. Pook's Hill lay below her, and all the turns of the brook as it wanders from out of the Willingford Woods between hop-gardens, to old Hobden's cottage at the Forge. The Sou'-West wind (there is always a wind by 'Volaterrae') blew from the bare ridge where Cherry Clack Windmill stands.

Now wind prowling through woods sounds like exciting things going to happen, and that is why on 'blowy days' you stand up in Volaterrae and shout bits of the *Lays* to suit its noises.

Una took Dan's catapult from its secret place, and made ready to meet Lars Porsena's army stealing through the wind-whitened aspens by the brook. A gust boomed up the valley, and Una chanted sorrowfully:

> 'Verbenna down to Ostia
> Hath wasted all the plain;
> Astur hath stormed Janiculum
> And the stout guards are slain.'

But the wind, not charging fair to the wood, started aside and shook a single oak in Gleason's pasture. Here it made itself all small and crouched among the grasses, waving the tips of them as a cat waves the tip of her tail before she springs.

'Now welcome—welcome Sextus,' sang Una, loading the catapult—

> 'Now welcome to thy home.
> Why dost thou turn and run away?
> Here lies the rod of Rome.'

She fired into the face of the lull, to wake up the cowardly wind, and heard a grunt from behind a thorn in the pasture.

'Oh, my Winkie!' she said aloud, and that was something she had picked up from Dan. 'I believe I've tickled up a Gleason cow.'

'You little painted beast!' a voice cried. 'I'll teach you to sling your masters!'

She looked down most cautiously, and saw a young man covered with hoopy bronze armour all glowing among the late broom. But what Una admired beyond all was his great bronze helmet with its red horse-tail that flicked in the wind. She could hear the long hairs rasp on his shimmery shoulder-plates.

'What does the Faun mean,' he said, half aloud to himself, 'by telling me the Painted People have changed?' He caught sight of Una's yellow head. 'Have you seen a painted lead-slinger?' he called.

'No-o,' said Una. 'But if you've seen a bullet——'

'Seen?' cried the man. 'It passed within a hair's breadth of my ear.'

'Well, that was me. I'm most awfully sorry.'

'Didn't the Faun tell you I was coming?' He smiled.

'Not if you mean Puck. I thought you were a Gleason cow. I—I didn't know you were a—a—— What are you?'

He laughed outright, showing a set of splendid teeth. His face and eyes were dark, and his eyebrows met above his big nose in one bushy black bar.

'They call me Parnesius. I have been an officer of the Seventh Cohort of the Thirtieth Legion—the Ulpia Victrix. Did you sling that bullet?'

'I did. I was using Dan's catapult,' said Una.

'Catapults!' said he. 'I ought to know something about them. Show me!'

He leaped the rough fence with a rattle of spear, shield, and armour, and hoisted himself into 'Volaterrae' as quickly as a shadow.

'A sling on a forked stick. *I* understand!' he cried, and pulled at the elastic. 'But what wonderful beast yields this stretching leather?'

'It's laccy—elastic. You put the bullet into that loop, and then you pull hard.'

The man pulled, and hit himself square on his thumb-nail.

'Each to his own weapon,' he said, gravely, handing it back. 'I am better with the bigger ma-

chine, little maiden. But it's a pretty toy. A wolf would laugh at it. Aren't you afraid of wolves?'

'There aren't any,' said Una.

'Never believe it! A wolf is like a Winged Hat. He comes when he isn't expected. Don't they hunt wolves here?'

'We don't hunt,' said Una, remembering what she had heard from grown-ups. 'We preserve—pheasants. Do you know them?'

'I ought to,' said the young man, smiling again, and he imitated the cry of the cock-pheasant so perfectly that a bird answered out of the wood.

'What a big painted clucking fool is a pheasant,' he said. 'Just like some Romans!'

'But you're a Roman yourself, aren't you?' said Una.

'Ye-es and no. I'm one of a good few thousands who have never seen Rome except in a picture. My people have lived at Vectis for generations. Vectis! That island West yonder that you can see from so far in clear weather.'

'Do you mean the Isle of Wight? It lifts up just before rain, and we see it from the Downs.'

'Very likely. Our Villa's on the South edge of the Island, by the Broken Cliffs. Most of it is three hundred years old, but the cow-stables, where our first ancestor lived, must be a hundred years older. Oh, quite that, because the founder of our

family had his land given to him by Agricola at the Settlement. It's not a bad little place for its size. In spring-time violets grow down to the very beach. I've gathered sea-weeds for myself and violets for my Mother many a time with our old nurse.'

'Was your nurse a—a Romaness too?'

'No, a Numidian. Gods be good to her! A dear, fat, brown thing with a tongue like a cow-bell. She was a free woman. By the way, are you free, maiden?'

'Oh, quite,' said Una. 'At least, till tea-time; and in summer our governess doesn't say much if we're late.'

The young man laughed again—a proper understanding laugh.

'I see,' said he. 'That accounts for your being in the wood. *We* hid among the cliffs.'

'Did *you* have a governess, then?'

'Did we not? A Greek, too. She had a way of clutching her dress when she hunted us among the gorze-bushes that made us laugh. Then she'd say she'd get us whipped. She never did though, bless her! Aglaia was a thorough sportswoman, for all her learning.'

'But what lessons did you do—when—when you were little!'

'Ancient history, the Classics, arithmetic, and so on,' he answered. 'My sister and I were thick-

heads, but my two brothers (I'm the middle one) liked those things, and, of course, Mother was clever enough for any six. She was nearly as tall as I am, and she looked like the new statue on the Western Road—the Demeter of the Baskets, you know. And funny! Roma Dea! How Mother could make us laugh!'

'What at?'

'Little jokes and sayings that every family has. Don't you know?'

'I know *we* have, but I didn't know other people had them too,' said Una. 'Tell me about all your family, please.'

'Good families are very much alike. Mother would sit spinning of evenings while Aglaia read in her corner, and Father did accounts, and we four romped about the passages. When our noise grew too loud the Pater would say, "Less tumult! Less tumult! Have you never heard of a Father's right over his children? He can slay them, my loves—slay them dead, and the Gods highly approve of the action!" Then Mother would prim up her dear mouth over the wheel and answer: "H'm! I'm afraid there can't be much of the Roman Father about you!" Then the Pater would roll up his accounts and say, "I'll show you!" and then—then, he'd be worse than any of us!'

'Fathers can—if they like,' said Una, her eyes dancing.

'Didn't I say all good families are very much the same?'

'What did you do in summer?' said Una. 'Play about, like us?'

'Yes, and we visited our friends. There are no wolves in Vectis. We had many friends, and as many ponies as we wished.'

'It must have been lovely,' said Una. 'I hope it lasted for ever.'

'Not quite, little maid. When I was about sixteen or seventeen, the Father felt gouty, and we all went to the Waters.'

'What waters?'

'At Aquae Solis. Every one goes there. You ought to get your Father to take you some day.'

'But where? I don't know,' said Una.

The young man looked astonished for a moment. 'Aquae Solis,' he repeated. 'The best baths in Britain. Just as good, I'm told, as Rome. All the old gluttons sit in its hot water, and talk scandal and politics. And the Generals come through the streets with their guards behind them; and the magistrates come in their chairs with their stiff guards behind them; and you meet fortune-tellers, and goldsmiths, and merchants, and philosophers, and feather-sellers, and ultra-Roman Britons, and ultra-British Romans, and tame tribesmen pretending to be civilised, and Jew lecturers, and—oh, everybody interesting. We young

people, of course, took no interest in politics. We had not the gout: there were many of our age like us. We did not find life sad.

'But while we were enjoying ourselves without thinking, my sister met the son of a magistrate in the West—and a year afterwards she was married to him. My young brother, who was always interested in plants and roots, met the First Doctor of a Legion from the City of the Legions, and he decided that he would be an Army doctor. I do not think it is a profession for a well-born man, but then—I'm not my brother. He went to Rome to study medicine, and now he's First Doctor of a Legion in Egypt—at Antinoe, I think, but I have not heard from him for some time.

'My eldest brother came across a Greek philosopher, and told my Father that he intended to settle down on the estate as a farmer and a philosopher. You see'—the young man's eyes twinkled—'his philosopher was a long-haired one!'

'I thought philosophers were bald,' said Una.

'Not all. She was very pretty. I don't blame him. Nothing could have suited me better than my eldest brother's doing this, for I was only too keen to join the Army. I had always feared I should have to stay at home and look after the estate while my brother took *this*.'

He rapped on his great glistening shield that never seemed to be in his way.

'So we were well contented—we young people—and we rode back to Clausentum along the Wood Road very quietly. But when we reached home, Aglaia, our governess, saw what had come to us. I remember her at the door, the torch over her head, watching us climb the cliff-path from the boat. "Aie! Aie!" she said. "Children you went away. Men and a woman you return!" Then she kissed Mother, and Mother wept. Thus our visit to the Waters settled our fates for each of us, Maiden.'

He rose to his feet and listened, leaning on the shield-rim.

'I think that's Dan—my brother,' said Una.

'Yes; and the Faun is with him,' he replied. as Dan with Puck stumbled through the copse.

'We should have come sooner,' Puck called, 'but the beauties of your native tongue, O Parnesius, have enthralled this young citizen.'

Parnesius looked bewildered, even when Una explained.

'Dan said the plural of "dominus" was "dominoes," and when Miss Blake said it wasn't he said he supposed it was "backgammon," and so he had to write it out twice—for cheek, you know.'

Dan had climbed into Volaterrae, hot and panting.

'I've run nearly all the way,' he gasped, 'and then Puck met me. How do you do, Sir?'

'I am in good health,' Parnesius answered. 'See! I have tried to bend the bow of Ulysses, but ——' He held up his thumb.

'I'm sorry. You must have pulled off too soon, said Dan. 'Puck said you were telling Una a story.'

'Continue, O Parnesius,' said Puck, who had perched himself on a dead branch above them. 'I will be chorus. Has he puzzled you much, Una?'

'Not a bit, except—I didn't know where Ak—Ak something was,' she answered.

'Oh, Aquae Solis. That's Bath, where the buns come from. Let the hero tell his own tale.'

Parnesius pretended to thrust his spear at Puck's legs, but Puck reached down, caught at the horse-tail plume, and pulled off the tail helmet.

Thanks, jester,' said Parnesius, shaking his curly dark head. 'That is cooler. Now hang it up for me.

'I was telling your sister how I joined the Army,' he said to Dan.

'Did you have to pass an Exam?' Dan asked eagerly.

'No. I went to my Father, and said I should like to enter the Dacian Horse (I had seen some at Aquae Solis); but he said I had better begin service in a regular Legion from Rome. Now, like many of our youngsters, I was not too fond of anything Roman. The Roman-born officers

and magistrates looked down on us British-born as though we were barbarians. I told my Father so.

'"I know they do," he said; "but remember, after all, we are the people of the Old Stock, and our duty is to the Empire."

'"To which Empire?" I asked. "We split the Eagle before I was born."

'"What thieves' talk is that?" said my Father. He hated slang.

'"Well, Sir," I said, "we've one Emperor in Rome, and I don't know how many Emperors the outlying Provinces have set up from time to time Which am I to follow?"

'"Gratian," said he. "At least he's a sportsman."

'"He's all that," I said. "Hasn't he turned himself into a raw-beef-eating Scythian?"

'"Where did you hear of it?" said the Pater.

'"At Aquae Solis," I said. It was perfectly true. This precious Emperor Gratian of ours had a bodyguard of fur-cloaked Scythians, and he was so crazy about them that he dressed like them. In Rome of all places in the world! It was as bad as if my own Father had painted himself blue!

'"No matter for the clothes," said the Pater. "They are only the fringe of the trouble. It began before your time or mine. Rome has forsaken her Gods, and must be punished. The great war with the Painted People broke out in the very

year the temples of our Gods were destroyed. We beat the Painted People in the very year our temples were rebuilt. Go back further still." . . . He went back to the time of Diocletian; and to listen to him you would have thought Eternal Rome herself was on the edge of destruction, just because a few people had become a little large-minded.

'*I* knew nothing about it. Aglaia never taught us the history of our own countrv. She was so full of her ancient Greeks.

' "There is no hope for Rome," said the Pater, at last. "She has forsaken her Gods, but if the Gods forgive *us* here, we may save Britain. To do that, we must keep the Painted People back. Therefore I tell you, Parnesius, as a Father, that if your heart is set on service, your place is among men on the Wall—and not with women among the cities."'

'What Wall?' asked Dan and Una at once.

'Father meant the one we call Hadrian's Wall. I'll tell you about it later. It was built long ago, across North Britain, to keep out the Painted People—Picts you call them. Father had fought in the great Pict War that lasted more than twenty years, and he knew what fighting meant. Theodosius, one of our great Generals, had chased the little beasts back far into the North before I was born: down at Vectis, of course, we never troubled our heads about them. But when my Father spoke

as he did, I kissed his hand, and waited for orders. We British-born Romans know what is due to our parents.'

'If I kissed my Father's hand, he'd laugh,' said Dan.

'Customs change; but if you do not obey your father, the Gods remember it. You may be quite sure of *that*.

'After our talk, seeing I was in earnest, the Pater sent me over to Clausentum to learn my foot-drill in a barrack full of foreign Auxiliaries—as unwashed and unshaved a mob of mixed barbarians as ever scrubbed a breast-plate. It was your stick in their stomachs and your shield in their faces to push them into any sort of formation. When I had learned my work the Instructor gave me a handful —and they were a handful!—of Gauls and Iberians to polish up till they were sent to their stations upcountry. I did my best, and one night a villa in the suburbs caught fire, and I had my handful out and at work before any of the other troops. I noticed a quiet looking man on the lawn, leaning on a stick. He watched us passing buckets from the pond, and at last he said to me: "Who are you?"

'"A probationer, waiting for a cohort," I answered. *I* didn't know who he was from Deucalion!

'"Born in Britain?" he said.

'"Yes, if you were born in Spain," I said, for he neighed his words like an Iberian mule.

'"And what might you call yourself when you are at home?" he said laughing.

'"That depends," I answered; "sometimes one thing and sometimes another. But now I'm busy."

'He said no more till we had saved the family gods (they were respectable householders), and then he grunted across the laurels: "Listen, young sometimes-one-thing-and-sometimes-another. In future call yourself Centurion of the Seventh Cohort of the Thirtieth, the Ulpia Victrix. That will help me to remember you. Your Father and a few other people call me Maximus."

'He tossed me the polished stick he was leaning on, and went away. You might have knocked me down with it!'

'Who was he?'

'Maximus himself, our great General!' *The* General of Britain who had been Theodosius's right hand in the Pict War! Not only had he given me my Centurion's stick direct, but three steps in a good Legion as well! A new man generally begins in the Tenth Cohort of his Legion, and works up.'

'And were you pleased?' said Una.

'Very. I thought Maximus had chosen me for my good looks and fine style in marching, but,

when I went home, the Pater told me he had served under Maximus in the great Pict War, and had asked him to promote me.'

'A child you were!' said Puck, from above.

'I was,' said Parnesius. 'Don't begrudge it me, Faun. Afterwards—the Gods know I put aside the games!' And Puck nodded, brown chin on brown hand, his big eyes still.

'The night before I left we sacrificed to our ancestors—the usual little Home Sacrifice—but I never prayed so earnestly to all the Good Shades, and then I went with my Father by boat to Regnum, and across the chalk eastwards to Anderida yonder.'

'Regnum? Anderida?' The children turned their faces to Puck.

'Regnum's Chichester,' he said, pointing towards Cherry Clack, and—he threw his arm South behind him—'Anderida's Pevensey.'

'Pevensey again!' said Dan. 'Where Weland landed?'

'Weland and a few others,' said Puck. 'Pevensey isn't young—even compared to me!'

'The head-quarters of the Thirtieth lay at Anderida in summer, but my own Cohort, the Seventh, was on the Wall up North. Maximus was inspecting Auxiliaries—the Abulci, I think—at Anderida, aud we stayed with him, for he and my Father were very old friends. I was only there

ten days when I was ordered to go up with thirty men to my Cohort.' He laughed merrily. 'A man never forgets his first march. I was happier than any Emperor when I led my handful through the North Gate of the Camp, and we saluted the guard and the Altar of Victory there.'

'How? How?' said Dan and Una.

Parnesius smiled, and stood up, flashing in his armour.

'So!' said he; and he moved slowly through the beautiful movements of the Roman Salute, that ends with a hollow clang of the shield coming into its place between the shoulders.

'Hai!' said Puck. 'That sets one thinking!'

'We went out fully armed,' said Parnesius, sitting down; 'but as soon as the road entered the Great Forest, my men expected the pack-horses to hang their shields on. "No!" I said; "you can dress like women in Anderida, but while you're with me you will carry your own weapons and armour."

'"But it's hot," said one of them, "and we haven't a doctor. Suppose we get sunstroke or a fever?"

'"Then die," I said, "and a good riddance to Rome! Up shield—up spears, and tighten your foot-wear!"

'"Don't think yourself Emperor of Britain already," a fellow shouted. I knocked him over

with the butt of my spear, and explained to these Roman-born Romans that, if there were any further trouble, we should go on with one man short. And, by the Light of the Sun, I meant it too! My raw Gauls at Clausentum had never treated me so.

'Then, quietly as a cloud, Maximus rode out of the fern (my Father behind him), and reined up across the road. He wore the Purple, as though he were already Emperor; his leggings were of white buckskin laced with gold.

'My men dropped like—like partridges.

'He said nothing for some time, only looked, with his eyes puckered. Then he crooked his fore-finger, and my men walked—crawled, I mean—to one side.

'"Stand in the sun, children," he said, and they formed up on the hard road.

'"What would you have done," he said to me, "if I had not been here?"

'"I should have killed that man," I answered.

'"Kill him now," he said. "He will not move a limb."

'"No," I said. "You've taken my men out of my command. I should only be your butcher if I killed him now." Do you see what I meant?' Parnesius turned to Dan.

'Yes,' said Dan. 'It wouldn't have been fair, somehow.'

'That was what I thought,' said Parnesius. But

Maximus frowned. "You'll never be an Emperor," he said. "Not even a General will you be."

'I was silent, but my Father seemed pleased.

'"I came here to see the last of you," he said.

'"You have seen it," said Maximus. "I shall never need your son any more. He will live and he will die an officer of a Legion—and he might have been Prefect of one of my Provinces. Now eat and drink with us," he said. "Your men will wait till you have finished."

'My miserable thirty stood like wine-skins glistening in the hot sun, and Maximus led us to where his people had set a meal. Himself he mixed the wine.

'"A year from now," he said, "you will remember that you have sat with the Emperor of Britain—and Gaul."

'"Yes," said the Pater, "you can drive two mules—Gaul and Britain."

'"Five years hence you will remember that you have drunk"—he passed me the cup and there was blue borage in it—"with the Emperor of Rome!"

'"No; you can't drive three mules; they will tear you in pieces," said my Father.

'"And you on the Wall, among the heather, will weep because your notion of justice was more to you than the favour of the Emperor of Rome."

'I sat quite still. One does not answer a General who wears Purple.

'"I am not angry with you," he went on; "I owe too much to your Father——"

'"You owe me nothing but advice that you never took," said the Pater.

'"——to be unjust to any of your family. Indeed, I say you will make a good officer, but, so far as I am concerned, on the Wall you will live, and on the Wall you will die," said Maximus.

'"Very like," said my Father. "But we shall have the Picts *and* their friends breaking through before long. You cannot move all troops out of Britain to make you Emperor, and expect the North to sit quiet."

'"I follow my destiny," said Maximus.

'"Follow it, then," said my Father, pulling up a fern root; "and die as Theodosius died."

'"Ah!" said Maximus. "My old General was killed because he served the Empire too well. *I* may be killed, but not for that reason," and he smiled a pale grey smile that made my blood run cold.

'"Then I had better follow my destiny," I said, "and take my men to the Wall."

He looked at me a long time, and bowed his head slanting like a Spaniard. "Follow it, boy," he said. That was all. I was only too glad to get away, though I had many messages for home. I found my men standing as they had been put—they had not even shifted their feet in the dust,—

and off I marched, still feeling that terrific smile like an east wind up my back. I never halted them till sunset, and'—he turned about and looked at Pook's Hill below him—'then I halted yonder.' He pointed to the broken, braken-covered shoulder of the Forge Hill behind old Hobden's cottage.

'There? Why, that's only the old Forge—where they made iron once,' said Dan.

'Very good stuff it was too,' said Parnesius, calmly. 'We mended three shoulder-straps here and had a spear-head riveted. The forge was rented from the Government by a one-eyed smith from Carthage. I remember we called him Cyclops. He sold me a beaver-skin rug for my sister's room.'

'But it couldn't have been here,' Dan insisted.

'But it was! From the Altar of Victory at Anderida to the First Forge in the Forest here is twelve miles seven hundred paces. It is all in the Road Book. A man doesn't forget his first march. I think I could tell you every station between this and——.' He leaned forward, but his eye was caught by the setting sun.

It had come down to the top of Cherry Clack Hill, and the light poured in between the tree trunks so that you could see red and gold and black deep into the heart of Far Wood; and Parnesius in his armour shone as though he had been afire.

'Wait,' he said, lifting a hand, and the sunlight

jinked on his glass bracelet. 'Wait! I pray to Mithras!'

He rose and stretched his arms westward, with deep, splendid-sounding words.

Then Puck began to sing too, in a voice like bells tolling, and as he sang he slipped from 'Volaterrae' to the ground, and beckoned the children to follow. They obeyed; it seemed as though the voices were pushing them along; and through the goldy-brown light on the beech leaves they walked, while Puck between them chanted something like this:—

Cur mundus militat sub vana gloria
Cujus prosperitas est transitoria?
Tam cito labitur ejus potentia
Quam vasa figuli quæ sunt fragilia.

They found themselves at the little locked gates of the wood.

Quo Cæsar abiit celsus imperio?
Vel Dives splendidus totus in prandio?
Dic ubi Tullius——

Still singing, he took Dan's hand and wheeled him round to face Una as she came out of the gate. It shut behind her, at the same time as Puck threw the memory-magicking Oak, Ash, and Thorn leaves over their heads.

'Well, you *are* jolly late,' said Una. 'Couldn't you get away before?'

'I did,' said Dan. 'I got away in lots of time, but—but I didn't know it was so late. Where've you been?'

'In Volaterrae—waiting for you.'

'Sorry,' said Dan. 'It was that beastly Latin.'

A BRITISH-ROMAN SONG

(A. D. 406)

My father's father saw it not,
And I, belike, shall never come,
To look on that so-holy spot—
The very Rome—

Crowned by all Time, all Art, all Might,
The equal work of Gods and Man—
City beneath whose oldest height
The Race began,—

Soon to send forth again a brood
Unshakable, we pray, that clings,
To Rome's thrice-hammered hardihood—
In arduous things.

Strong heart with triple armour bound,
Beat strongly, for thy life-blood runs,
Age after Age, the Empire round—
In us thy Sons,

Who, distant from the Seven Hills,
Loving and serving much, require
Thee, Thee to guard 'gainst home-born ills,
The Imperial Fire!

ON THE GREAT WALL

ON THE GREAT WALL

When I left Rome for Lalage's sake
By the Legions' Road to Rimini,
She vowed her heart was mine to take
With me and my shield to Rimini—
(Till the Eagles flew from Rimini !)
And I've tramped Britain and I've tramped Gaul
And the Pontic shore where the snow-flakes fall
As white as the neck of Lalage—
As cold as the heart of Lalage !
And I've lost Britain and I've lost Gaul

(the voice seemed very cheerful about it),

And I've lost Rome, and worst of all,
I've lost Lalage !

THEY were standing by the gate to Far Wood when they heard this song. Without a word they hurried to their private gap and wriggled through the hedge almost atop of a jay that was feeding from Puck's hand.

'Gently!' said Puck. 'What are you looking for?'

'Parnesius of course,' Dan answered. 'We've only just remembered yesterday. It isn't fair.'

Puck chuckled as he rose. 'I'm sorry, but children who spend the afternoon with me and a

Roman Centurion need a little settling dose of Magic before they go to tea with their governess. Ohé, Parnesius!' he called.

'Here, Faun!' came the answer from 'Volaterrae.' They could see the shimmer of bronze armour in the beech crotch, and the friendly flash of the great shield uplifted.

'I have driven out the Britons.' Parnesius laughed like a boy. 'I occupy their high forts. But Rome is merciful! You may come up.' And up they three all scrambled.

'What was the song you were singing just now?' said Una, as soon as she had settled herself.

'That? Oh, *Rimini*. It's one of the tunes that are always being born somewhere in the Empire. They run like a pestilence for six months or a year, till another one pleases the Legions, and then they march to *that*.'

'Tell them about the marching, Parnesius. Few people nowadays walk from end to end of this country,' said Puck.

'The greater their loss. I know nothing better than the Long March when your feet are hardened, You begin after the mists have risen, and you end. perhaps, an hour after sundown.'

'And what do you have to eat?' Dan asked, promptly.

'Fat bacon, beans and bread and whatever wine

happens to be in the rest-houses. But soldiers are born grumblers. Their very first day out, my men complained of our water-ground British corn. They said it wasn't so filling as the rough stuff that is ground in the Roman ox-mills. However, they had to fetch and eat it.'

'Fetch it? Where from?' said Una.

'From that newly-invented water-mill below the Forge.'

'That's Forge Mill—*our* Mill!' Una looked at Puck.

'Yes; yours,' Puck put in. 'How old did you think it was?'

'I don't know. Didn't Sir Richard Dalyngridge talk about it?'

'He did, and it was old in his day,' Puck answered. 'Hundreds of years old.'

'It was new in mine,' said Parnesius. 'My men looked at the flour in their helmets as though it had been a nest of adders. They did it to try my patience. But I—addressed them, and we became friends. To tell the truth, they taught me the Roman Step. You see, I'd only served with quick-marching Auxiliaries. A Legion's pace is altogether different. It is a long, slow stride, that never varies from sunrise to sunset. "Rome's Race —Rome's Pace," as the proverb says. Twenty-four miles in eight hours, neither more nor less. Head and spear up, shield on your back, cuirass-

collar open one hand's breadth—and that's how you take the Eagles through Britain.'

'And did you meet any adventures?' said Dan.

'There are no adventures South the Wall,' said Parnesius. 'The worst thing that happened me was having to appear before a magistrate up North, where a wandering philosopher had jeered at the Eagles. I was able to show that the old man had deliberately blocked our road, and the magistrate told him, out of his own Book, I believe, that, whatever his God might be, he should pay proper respect to Caesar.

'What did you do?' said Dan.

'Went on. Why should *I* care for such things, my business being to reach my station? It took me twenty days.

'Of course, the farther North you go the emptier are the roads. At last you fetch clear of the forests and climb bare hills, where wolves howl in the ruins of our cities that have been. No more pretty girls; no more jolly magistrates who knew your Father when he was young, and invite you to stay with them; no news at the temples and way-stations except bad news of wild beasts. There's where you meet hunters, and trappers for the Circuses, prodding along chained bears and muzzled wolves. Your pony shies at them, and your men laugh.

'The houses change from gardened villas to shut

forts with watch-towers of grey stone, and great stone-walled sheepfolds, guarded by armed Britons of the North Shore. In the naked hills beyond the naked houses, where the shadows of the clouds play like cavalry charging, you see puffs of black smoke from the mines. The hard road goes on and on—and the wind sings through your helmet-plume—past altars to Legions and Generals forgotten, and broken statues of Gods and Heroes, and thousands of graves where the mountain foxes and hares peep at you. Red-hot in summer, freezing in winter, is that big, purple heather country of broken stone.

'Just when you think you are at the world's end, you see a smoke from East to West as far as the eye can turn, and then, under it, also as far as the eye can stretch, houses and temples, shops and theatres, barracks, and granaries, trickling along like dice behind—always behind—one long, low, rising and falling, and hiding and showing line of towers. And that is the Wall!'

'Ah!' said the children taking breath.

'You may well,' said Parnesius. 'Old men who have followed the Eagles since boyhood say nothing in the Empire is more wonderful than first sight of the Wall!'

'Is it just *a* Wall? Like the one round the kitchen-garden?' said Dan.

'No, no! It is *the* Wall. Along the top are

towers with guard-houses, small towers, between. Even on the narrowest part of it three men with shields can walk abreast from guard-house to guard-house. A little curtain wall, no higher than a man's neck, runs along the top of the thick wall, so that from a distance you see the helmets of the sentries sliding back and forth like beads. Thirty feet high is the Wall, and on the Picts' side, the North, is a ditch, strewn with blades of old swords and spear-heads set in wood, and tyres of wheels joined by chains. The Little People come there to steal iron for their arrow-heads.

'But the Wall itself is not more wonderful than the town behind it. Long ago there were great ramparts and ditches on the South side, and no one was allowed to build there. Now the ramparts are partly pulled down and built over, from end to end of the Wall; making a thin town eighty miles long. Think of it! One roaring, rioting, cockfighting, wolf-baiting, horse-racing town, from Ituna on the West to Segedunum on the cold eastern beach! On one side heather, woods and ruins where Picts hide, and on the other, a vast town—long like a snake, and wicked like a snake. Yes, a snake basking beside a warm wall!

'My Cohort, I was told, lay at Hunno, where the Great North Road runs through the Wall into the Province of Valentia.' Parnesius laughed scornfully. 'The Province of Valentia! We fol-

lowed the road, therefore, into Hunno town, and stood astonished. The place was a fair—a fair of peoples from every corner of the Empire. Some were racing horses: some sat in wine-shops: some watched dogs baiting bears, and many gathered in a ditch to see cocks fight. A boy not much older than myself, but I could see he was an Officer, reined up before me and asked what I wanted.

'"My station," I said, and showed him my shield.' Parnesius held up his broad shield with its three X's like letters on a beer-cask.

'"Lucky omen!" said he. "Your Cohort's the next tower to us, but they're all at the cock-fight. This is a happy place. Come and wet the Eagles." He meant to offer me a drink.

'"When I've handed over my men," I said. I felt angry and ashamed.

'"Oh, you will soon outgrow that sort of nonsense," he answered. "But don't let me interfere with your hopes. Go on to the Statue of Roma Dea. You can't miss it. The main road into Valentia!" and he laughed and rode off. I could see the Statue not a quarter of a mile away, and there I went. At some time or other the Great North Road ran under it into Valentia; but the far end had been blocked up because of the Picts, and on the plaster a man had scratched, "Finish!" It was like marching into a cave. We grounded spears together, my little thirty, and it echoed in

the barrel of the arch, but none came. There was a door at one side painted with our number. We prowled in, and I found a cook asleep, and ordered him to give us food. Then I climbed to the top of the Wall, and looked out over the Pict country, and I—thought,' said Parnesius. 'The bricked-up arch with "Finish!" on the plaster was what shook me, for I was not much more than a boy.'

'What a shame!' said Una. 'But did you feel happy after you'd had a good——' Dan stopped her with a nudge.

'Happy?' said Parnesius. 'When the men of the Cohort I was to command came back unhelmeted from the cock-fight, their birds under their arms, and asked me who I was? No, I was not happy; but I made my new Cohort unhappy too. . . . I wrote my Mother I was happy, but, oh, my friends'—he stretched arms over bare knees—'I would not wish my worst enemy to suffer as I suffered through my first months on the Wall. Remember this: among the officers was scarcely one, except myself (and I thought I had lost the favour of Maximus, my General), scarcely one who had not done something of wrong or folly. Either he had killed a man, or taken money, or insulted the magistrates, or blasphemed the Gods, and so had been sent to the Wall as a hiding-place from shame or fear. And the men were as the officers. Remember, also, that the Wall was manned by every breed

and race in the Empire. No two towers spoke the same tongue, or worshipped the same Gods. In one thing only we were all equal. No matter what arms we had used before we came to the Wall, *on* the Wall we were all archers, like the Scythians. The Pict cannot run away from the arrow, or crawl under it. He is a bowman himself. *He* knows!'

'I suppose you were fighting Picts all the time,' said Dan.

'Picts seldom fight. I never saw a fighting Pict for half a year. The tame Picts told us they had all gone North.'

'What is a tame Pict?' said Dan.

'A Pict—there were many such—who speaks a few words of our tongue, and slips across the Wall to sell ponies and wolf-hounds. Without a horse and a dog, *and* a friend, man would perish. The Gods gave me all three, and there is no gift like friendship. Remember this'—Parnesius turned to Dan—'when you become a young man. For your fate will turn on the first true friend you make.'

'He means,' said Puck, grinning, 'that if you try to make yourself a decent chap when you're young, you'll make rather decent friends when you grow up. If you're a beast, you'll have beastly friends. Listen to the Pious Parnesius on Friendship!'

'I am not pious,' Parnesius answered, 'but I know what goodness means; and my friend,

though he was without hope, was ten thousand times better than I. Stop laughing, Faun!'

'Oh Youth Eternal and All-believing,' cried Puck, as he rocked on the branch above. 'Tell them about your Pertinax.'

'He was that friend the Gods sent me—the boy who spoke to me when I first came. Little older than myself, commanding the Augusta Victoria Cohort on the tower next to us and the Numidians. In virtue he was far my superior.'

'Then why was he on the Wall?' Una asked, quickly. 'They'd all done something bad. You said so yourself.'

'He was the nephew, his Father had died, of a great rich man of Gaul who was not always kind to his Mother. When Pertinax grew up, he discovered this, and so his uncle shipped him off, by trickery and force, to the Wall. We came to know each other at a ceremony in our Temple—in the dark. It was the Bull Killing,' Parnesius explained to Puck.

'*I* see,' said Puck, and turned to the children. 'That's something you wouldn't quite understand. Parnesius means he met Pertinax in church.'

'Yes—in the Cave we first met, and we were both raised to the Degree of Gryphons together.' Parnesius lifted his hand towards his neck for an instant. 'He had been on the Wall two years, and knew the Picts well. He taught me first how to take Heather.'

'What's that?' said Dan.

'Going out hunting in the Pict country with a tame Pict. You are quite safe so long as you are his guest, and wear a sprig of heather where it can be seen. If you went alone you would surely be killed, if you were not smothered first in the bogs. Only the Picts know their way about those black and hidden bogs. Old Allo, the one-eyed, withered little Pict from whom we bought our ponies, was our special friend. At first we went only to escape from the terrible town, and to talk together about our homes. Then he showed us how to hunt wolves and those great red deer with horns like jewish candlesticks. The Roman-born officers rather looked down on us for doing this, but we preferred the heather to their amusements. Believe me,' Parnesius turned again to Dan, 'a boy is safe from all things that really harm when he is astride a pony or after a deer. Do you remember, O Faun,' he turned to Puck, 'the little altar I built to the Sylvan Pan by the pine-forest beyond the brook?'

'Which? The stone one with the line from Xenophon?' said Puck, in quite a new voice.

'No. What do I know of Xenophon? That was Pertinax—after he had shot his first mountain-hare with an arrow—by chance! Mine I made of round pebbles in memory of my first bear. It took me one happy day to build.' Parnesius faced the children quickly.

'And that was how we lived on the Wall for two years—a little scuffling with the Picts, and a great deal of hunting with old Allo in the Pict country. He called us his children sometimes, and we were fond of him and his barbarians, though we never let them paint us Pict fashion. The marks endure till you die.'

'How's it done?' said Dan. 'Anything like tattooing?'

'They prick the skin till the blood runs, and rub in coloured juices. Allo was painted blue, green, and red from his forehead to his ankles. He said it was part of his religion. He told us about his religion (Pertinax was always interested in such things), and as we came to know him well, he told us what was happening in Britain behind the Wall. Many things took place behind us in those days. And, by the Light of the Sun,' said Parnesius, earnestly, 'there was not much that those little people did not know! He told me when Maximus crossed over to Gaul, after he had made himself Emperor of Britain, and what troops and emigrants he had taken with him. *We* did not get the news on the Wall till fifteen days later. He told me what troops Maximus was taking out of Britain every month to help him to conquer Gaul; and I always found the numbers as he said. Wonderful! And I tell another strange thing!'

He jointed his hands across his knees, and

leaned his head on the curve of the shield behind him.

'Late in the summer, when the first frosts begin and the Picts kill their bees, we three rode out after wolf with some new hounds. Rutilianus, our General, had given us ten days' leave, and we had pushed beyond the Second Wall—beyond the Province of Valentia—into the higher hills, where there are not even any of Rome's old ruins. We killed a she-wolf before noon, and while Allo was skinning her he looked up and said to me. "When you are Captain of the Wall, my child, you won't be able to do this any more!"

'I might as well have been made Prefect of Lower Gaul, so I laughed and said, "Wait till I am Captain." "No, don't wait," said Allo. "Take my advice and go home—both of you." "We have no homes," said Pertinax. "You know that as well as we do. We're finished men—thumbs down against both of us. Only men without hope would risk their necks on your ponies." The old man laughed one of those short Pict laughs—like a fox barking on a frosty night. "I'm fond of you two," he said. "Besides, I have taught you what little you know about hunting. Take my advice and go home."

'"We can't," I said. "I'm out of favour with my General, for one thing; and for another, Pertinax has an uncle."

'"I don't know about his uncle," said Allo, "but the trouble with you, Parnesius, is that your General thinks well of you."

'"Roma Dea!" said Pertinax, sitting up. "What can you guess what Maximus thinks, you old horse-coper?"

'Just then (you know how near the brutes creep when one is eating?) a great dog-wolf jumped out behind us, and away our rested hounds tore after him, with us at their tails. He ran us far out of any country we'd ever heard of, straight as an arrow till sunset, towards the sunset. We came at last to long capes stretching into winding waters, and on a grey beach below us we saw ships drawn up. Forty-seven we counted—not Roman galleys but the raven-winged ships from the North where Rome does not rule. Men moved in the ships, and the sun flashed on their helmets—winged helmets of the red-haired men from the North where Rome does not rule. We watched, and we counted, and we wondered; for though we had heard rumours concerning these Winged Hats, as the Picts called them, never before had we looked upon them.

'"Come away! Come away!" said Allo. "My Heather won't protect you here. We shall all be killed!" His legs trembled like his voice. Back we went—back across the heather under the moon, till it was nearly morning, and our poor beasts stumbled on some ruins.

'When we woke, very stiff and cold, Allo was mixing the meal and water. One does not light fires in the Pict country except near a village. The little men are always signalling to each other with smokes, and strange smoke brings them out buzzing like bees. They can sting, too!

'"What we saw last night was a trading-station," said Allo. "Nothing but a trading-station."

'"I do not like lies on an empty stomach," said Pertinax. "I suppose" (he had eyes like an eagle's), "I suppose *that* is a trading-station also?" He pointed to a smoke far off on a hill-top, ascending in what we call Pict's Call:—Puff—double-puff: double-puff—puff! They make it by raising and dropping a wet hide on a fire.

'"No," said Allo, pushing the platter back into the bag. "That is for you and me. Your fate is fixed. Come."

'We came. When one takes Heather, one must obey one's Pict—but that wretched smoke was twenty miles distant, well over on the east coast, and the day was as hot as a bath.

'"Whatever happens," said Allo, while our ponies grunted along, "I want you to remember me."

'"I shall not forget," said Pertinax. "You have cheated me out of my breakfast."

'"What is a handful of crushed oats to a Roman?" he said. Then he laughed his laugh

that was not a laugh. "What would *you* do if *you* were a handful of oats being crushed between the upper and lower stones of a mill?"

'"I'm Pertinax, not a riddle-guesser," said Pertinax.

'"You're a fool," said Allo. "Your Gods and my Gods are threatened by strange Gods, and all you can do is to laugh."

'"Threatened men live long," I said.

'"I pray the Gods that may be true," he said. "But I ask you again not to forget me."

'We climbed the last hot hill and looked out on the eastern sea three or four miles off. There was a small sailing-galley of the North Gaul pattern at anchor, her landing-plank down and her sail half up; and below us, alone in a hollow, holding his pony, sat Maximus, Emperor of Britain! He was dressed like a hunter, and he leaned on his little stick; but I knew that back as far as I could see it, and I told Pertinax.

'"You're madder than Allo!" he said. "It must be the sun!"

'Maximus never stirred till we stood before him. Then he looked me up and down, and said: "Hungry again? It seems to be my destiny to feed you whenever we meet. I have food here. Allo shall cook it."

'"No," said Allo. "A Prince in his own land does not wait on wandering Emperors. I feed my

two children without asking your leave." He began to blow up the ashes.

'"I was wrong," said Pertinax. "We are all mad. Speak up, O Madman called Emperor!"

'Maximus smiled his terrible tight-lipped smile, but two years on the Wall do not make a man afraid of mere looks. So I was not afraid.

'"I meant you, Parnesius, to live and die an Officer of the Wall," said Maximus. "But it seems from these," he fumbled in his breast, "you can think as well as draw." He pulled out a roll of letters I had written to my people, full of drawings of Picts, and bears, and men I had met on the Wall. Mother and my sister always liked my pictures.

'He handed me one that I had called "Maximus's Soldiers." It showed a row of fat wine-skins and our old Doctor of the Hunno hospital snuffing at them. Each time that Maximus had taken troops out of Britain to help him to conquer Gaul, he used to send the garrisons more wine—to keep them quiet, I suppose. On the Wall, we always called a wine-skin a "Maximus." Oh, yes; and I had drawn them in Imperial helmets!

'"Not long since," he went on, "men's names were sent up to Cæsar for smaller jokes than this."

'"True, Cæsar," said Pertinax; "but you forget that was before I, your friend's friend, became such a good spear-thrower."

'He did not actually point his hunting spear at Maximus, but balanced it on his palm—so!

'"I was speaking of time past," said Maximus, never fluttering an eyelid. "Nowadays one is only too pleased to find boys who can think for themselves, *and* their friends." He nodded at Pertinax. "Your Father lent me the letters, Parnesius, so you run no risk from me."

'"None whatever," said Pertinax, and rubbed the spear-point on his sleeve.

'"I have been forced to reduce the garrisons in Britain, because I need troops in Gaul. Now I come to take troops from the Wall itself," said he.

'"I wish you joy of us," said Pertinax. "We're the last sweepings of the Empire—the men without hope. Myself, I'd sooner trust condemned criminals."

'"You think so?" he said, quite seriously. "But it will only be till I win Gaul. One must always risk one's life, or one's soul, or one's peace—or some little thing."

'Allo passed round the fire with the sizzling deer's meat. He served us two first.

'"Ah!" said Maximus, waiting his turn. "I perceive you are in your own country. Well, you deserve it. They tell me you have quite a following among the Picts, Parnesius."

'"I have hunted with them," I said. "Maybe I have a few friends among the Heather."

'"He is the only armoured man of you all who

understands us," said Allo, and he began a long speech about our virtues, and how we had saved one of his grandchildren from a wolf the year before.'

'Had you?' said Una.

'Yes; but that was neither here nor there. The little green man orated like a—like Cicero. He made us out to be magnificent fellows. Maximus never took his eyes off our faces.

'"Enough," he said. "I have heard Allo on you. I wish to hear you on the Picts."

'I told him as much as I knew, and Pertinax helped me out. There is never harm in a Pict if you but take the trouble to find out what he wants. Their real grievance against us came from our burning their heather. The whole garrison of the Wall moved out twice a year, and solemnly burned the heather for ten miles North. Rutilianus, our General, called it clearing the country. The Picts, of course, scampered away, and all we did was to destroy their bee-bloom in the summer, and ruin their sheep-food in the spring.

'"True, quite true," said Allo. "How can we make our holy heather-wine, if you burn our bee-pasture?"

'We talked long, Maximus asking keen questions that showed he knew much and had thought more about the Picts. He said presently to me: "If I gave you the old Province of Valentia to govern, could you keep the Picts contented till I

won Gaul? Stand away, so that you do not see Allo's face; and speak your own thoughts."

'"No," I said. "You cannot re-make that Province. The Picts have been free too long."

'"Leave them their village councils, and let them furnish their own soldiers," he said. "You, I am sure, would hold the reins very lightly."

'"Even then, no," I said. "At least not now. They have been too oppressed by us to trust anything with a Roman name for years and years."

'I heard old Allo behind me mutter: "Good child!"

'"Then what do you recommend," said Maximus, "to keep the North quiet till I win Gaul?"

'"Leave the Picts alone," I said. "Stop the heather-burning at once, and—they are improvident little animals—send them a ship-load or two of corn now and then."

'"Their own men must distribute it—not some cheating Greek accountant," said Pertinax.

'"Yes, and allow them to come to our hospitals when they are sick," I said.

'"Surely they would die first," said Maximus.

'"Not if Parnesius brought them in," said Allo. "I could show you twenty wolf-bitten, bear-clawed Picts within twenty miles of here. But Parnesius must stay with them in Hospital, else they would go mad with fear."

'"*I* see," said Maximus. "Like everything

else in the world, it is one man's work. You, I think, are that one man."

'"Pertinax and I are one," I said.

'"As you please, so long as you work. Now, Allo, you know that I mean your people no harm. Leave us to talk together," said Maximus.

'"No need!" said Allo. "I am the corn between the upper and lower millstones. I must know what the lower millstone means to do. These boys have spoken the truth as far as they know it. I, a Prince, will tell you the rest. I am troubled about the Men of the North." He squatted like a hare in the heather, and looked over his shoulder.

'"I also," said Maximus, "or I should not be here."

'"Listen," said Allo. "Long and long ago the Winged Hats"—he meant the Northmen—"came to our beaches and said, 'Rome falls! Push her down!' We fought you. You sent men. We were beaten. After that we said to the Winged Hats, 'You are liars! Make our men alive that Rome killed, and we will believe you.' They went away ashamed. Now they come back bold, and they tell the old tale, which we begin to believe—that Rome falls!"

'"Give me three years' peace on the wall," cried Maximus, "and I will show you and all the ravens how they lie!"

'"Ah, I wish it too! I wish to save what is

left of the corn from the millstones. But you shoot us Picts when we come to borrow a little iron from the Iron Ditch; you burn our heather, which is all our crop; you trouble us with your great catapults. Then you hide behind the Wall, and scorch us with Greek fire. How can I keep my young men from listening to the Winged Hats—in winter especially, when we are hungry? My young men will say, 'Rome can neither fight nor rule. She is taking her men out of Britain. The Winged Hats will help us to push down the Wall. Let us show them the secret roads across the bogs.' Do *I* want that? No!" He spat like an adder. "*I* would keep the secrets of my people though I were burned alive. My two children here have spoken truth. Leave us Picts alone. Comfort us, and cherish us, and feed us from far off—with the hand behind your back. Parnesius understands us. Let *him* have rule on the Wall, and I will hold my young men quiet for"—he ticked it off on his fingers—"one year easily: the next year, not so easily: the third year, perhaps! See, I give you three years. If then you do not show us that Rome is strong in men and terrible in arms, the Winged Hats, I tell you, will sweep down the Wall from either sea till they meet in the middle, and you will go. *I* shall not grieve over that, but well I know tribe never helps tribe except for one price. We Picts will go too. The Winged Hats

will grind us to this!" He tossed a handful of dust in the air.

'"Oh, Roma Dea!" said Maximus, half aloud. "It is always one man's work—always and everywhere!"

'"And one man's life," said Allo. "You are Emperor, but not God. You may die."

'"I have thought of that, too," said he. "Very good. If this wind holds, I shall be at the East end of the Wall by morning. To-morrow, then, I shall see you two when I inspect; and I will make you Captains of the Wall for this work."

'"One instant, Cæsar," said Pertinax. "All men have their price. I am not bought yet."

'"Do *you* also begin to bargain so early?" said Maximus. "Well?"

'"Give me justice against my uncle Icenus, the Duumvir of Divio in Gaul," he said.

'"Only a life? I thought it would be money or an office. Certainly you shall have him. Write his name on these tablets—on the red side; the other is for the living!" And Maximus held out his tablets.

"He is of no use to me dead," said Pertinax. "My mother is a widow. I am far off. I am not sure he pays her all her dowry."

'"No matter. My arm is reasonably long. We will look through your uncle's accounts in

due time. Now, farewell till to-morrow, O Captains of the Wall!"

'We saw him grow small across the heather as he walked to the galley. There were Picts, scores, each side of him, hidden behind stones. He never looked left or right. He sailed away Southerly, full spread before the evening breeze, and when we had watched him out to sea, we were silent. We understood Earth bred few men like to this man.

'Presently Allo brought the ponies and held them for us to mount—a thing he had never done before.

'"Wait awhile," said Pertinax, and he made a little altar of cut turf, and strewed heather-bloom atop, and laid upon it a letter from a girl in Gaul.

'"What do you do, O my friend?" I said.

'"I sacrifice to my dead youth," he answered, and, when the flames had consumed the letter, he ground them out with his heel. Then we rode back to that Wall of which we were to be Captains.'

Parnesius stopped. The children sat still, not even asking if that were all the tale. Puck beckoned, and pointed the way out of the wood. 'Sorry,' he whispered, 'but you must go now.'

'We haven't made him angry, have we?' said Una. 'He looks so far off, and—and—thinky.'

'Bless your heart, no. Wait till to-morrow. It won't be long. Remember, you've been playing "*Lays of Ancient Rome.*" '

And as soon as they had scrambled through their gap, where Oak, Ash and Thorn grow, that was all they remembered.

A SONG TO MITHRAS

Mithras, God of the Morning, our trumpets waken the Wall!
'Rome is above the Nations, but Thou art over all!'
Now as the names are answered and the guards are marched away,
Mithras, also a soldier, give us strength for the day!

Mithras, God of the Noontide, the heather swims in the heat,
Our helmets scorch our foreheads; our sandals burn our feet!
Now in the ungirt hour; now ere we blink and drowse,
Mithras, also a soldier, keep us true to our vows!

Mithras, God of the Sunset, low on the Western main.
Thou descending immortal, immortal to rise again!
Now when the watch is ended, now when the wine is drawn,
Mithras, also a soldier, keep us pure till the dawn!

Mithras, God of the Midnight, here where the great bull lies,
Look on thy children in darkness. Oh take our sacrifice!
Many roads Thou hast fashioned: all of them lead to the Light,
Mithras, also a soldier, teach us to die aright!

THE WINGED HATS

THE WINGED HATS

THE next day happened to be what they called a Wild Afternoon. Father and Mother went out to pay calls; Miss Blake went for a ride on her bicycle, and they were left all alone till eight o'clock.

When they had seen their dear parents and their dear preceptress politely off the premises they got a cabbage-leaf full of raspberries from the gardener, and a Wild Tea from Ellen. They ate the raspberries to prevent their squashing, and they meant to divide the cabbage-leaf with Three Cows down at the Theatre, but they came across a dead hedgehog which they simply *had* to bury, and the leaf was too useful to waste.

Then they went on to the Forge and found old Hobden the hedger at home with his son the Bee Boy who is not quite right in his head, but who can pick up swarms of bees in his naked hands; and the Bee Boy told them the rhyme about the slow-worm :—

> 'If I had eyes as I could see,
> No mortal man would trouble me.'

They all had tea together by the hives, and Hobden said the loaf cake which Ellen had given them was almost as good as what his wife used to make, and he showed them how to set a wire at the right height for hares. They knew about rabbits already.

Then they climbed up Long Ditch into the lower end of Far Wood. This is sadder and darker than the 'Volaterrae' end because of an old marl-pit full of black water, where weepy, hairy moss hangs round the stumps of the willows and alders. But the birds come to perch on the dead branches, and Hobden says that the bitter willow-water is a sort of medicine for sick animals.

They sat down on a felled oak-trunk in the shadows of the beech undergrowth, and were looping the wires Hobden had given them, when they saw Parnesius.

'How quietly you came!' said Una, moving up to make room. 'Where's Puck?'

'The Faun and I have disputed whether it is better that I should tell you all my tale, or leave it untold,' he replied.

'I only said that if he told it as it happened you wouldn't understand it,' said Puck, jumping up like a squirrel from behind the log.

'I don't understand all of it,' said Una, 'but I like hearing about the little Picts.'

'What I can't understand,' said Dan, 'is how

Maximus knew all about the Picts when he was over in Gaul.'

'He who makes himself Emperor anywhere must know everything, everywhere,' said Parnesius. 'We had this much from Maximus's mouth after the Games.'

'Games? What games?' said Dan.

Parnesius stretched his arm out stiffly, thumb pointed to the ground. 'Gladiators! *That* sort of game,' he said. 'There were two days' Games in his honour when he landed all unexpected at Segedunum on the East end of the Wall. Yes, the day after we had met him we held two days' games; but I think the greatest risk was run, not by the poor wretches on the sand, but by Maximus. In the old days the Legions kept silence before their Emperor. So did not we! You could hear the solid roar run West along the Wall as his chair was carried rocking through the crowds. The garrison beat round him—clamouring, clowning, asking for pay, for change of quarters, for anything that came into their wild heads. That chair was like a little boat among waves, dipping and falling, but always rising again after one had shut the eyes.' Parnesius shivered.

'Were they angry with him?' said Dan.

'No more angry than wolves in a cage when their trainer walks among them. If he had turned his back an instant, or for an instant had ceased

to hold their eyes, there would have been another Emperor made on the Wall that hour. Was it not so, Faun?'

'So it was. So it always will be,' said Puck.

'Late in the evening his messenger came for us, and we followed to the Temple of Victory, where he lodged with Rutilianus, the General of the Wall. I had hardly seen the General before, but he always gave me leave when I wished to take Heather. He was a great glutton, and kept five Asian cooks, and he came of a family that believed in oracles. We could smell his good dinner when we entered, but the tables were empty. He lay snorting on a couch. Maximus sat apart among long rolls of accounts. Then the doors were shut.

'"These are your men," said Maximus to the General, who propped his eye-corners open with his gouty fingers, and stared at us like a fish.

'"I shall know them again, Cæsar," said Rutilianus.

'"Very good," said Maximus. "Now hear! You are not to move man or shield on the Wall except as these boys shall tell you. You will do nothing, except eat, without their permission. They are the head and arms. You are the belly!"

'"As Cæsar pleases," the old man grunted. "If my pay and profits are not cut, you may make my Ancestors' Oracle my master. Rome has been!

Rome has been!" Then he turned on his side to sleep.

'"He has it," said Maximus. "We will get to what I need."

'He unrolled full copies of the number of men and supplies on the Wall—down to the sick that very day in Hunno Hospital. Oh, but I groaned when his pen marked off detachment after detachment of our best—of our least worthless men! He took two towers of our Scythians, two of our North British auxiliaries, two Numidian cohorts, the Dacians all, and half the Belgians. It was like an eagle pecking a carcass.

'"And now, how many catapults have you?" He turned up a new list, but Pertinax laid his open hand there.

'"No, Cæsar," said he. "Do not tempt the Gods too far. Take men, or engines, but not both; else we refuse."'

'Engines?' said Una.

'The catapults of the Wall—huge things forty feet high to the head—firing nets of raw stone or forged bolts. Nothing can stand against them. He left us our catapults at last, but he took a Cæsar's half of our men without pity. We were a shell when he rolled up the lists!

'"Hail, Cæsar! We, about to die, salute you!" said Pertinax, laughing. "If any enemy even leans against the Wall now, it will tumble."

'"Give me the three years Allo spoke of," he answered, "and you shall have twenty thousand men of your own choosing up here. But now it is a gamble—a game played against the Gods, and the stakes are Britain, Gaul and perhaps, Rome You play on my side?"

'"We will play, Cæsar," I said, for I had never met a man like this man.

'"Good. To-morrow," said he, "I proclaim you Captains of the Wall before the troops."

'So we went into the moonlight, where they were cleaning the ground after the Games. We saw great Roma Dea atop of the Wall, the frost on her helmet, and her spear pointed towards the North Star. We saw the twinkle of night-fires all along the guard-towers, and the line of the black catapults growing smaller and smaller in the distance. All these things we knew till we were weary; but that night they seemed very strange to us, because the next day we knew we were to be their masters.

'The men took the news well; but when Maximus went away with half our strength, and we had to spread ourselves into the emptied towers, and the townspeople complained that trade would be ruined, and the Autumn gales blew—it was dark days for us two. Here Pertinax was more than my right hand. Being born and bred among the great country-houses in Gaul, he knew the proper words to address to all—from Roman-born Centu-

rions to those dogs of the Third—the Libyans. And he spoke to each as though that man were as high-minded as himself. Now *I* saw so strongly what things needed to be done, that I forgot things are only accomplished by means of men. That was a mistake.

'I feared nothing from the Picts, at least for that year, but Allo warned me that the Winged Hats would soon come in from the sea at each end of the Wall to prove to the Picts how weak we were. So I made ready in haste, and none too soon. I shifted our best men to the ends of the Wall, and set up screened catapults by the beach. The Winged Hats would drive in before the snow-squalls—ten or twenty boats at a time—on Segedunum or Ituna, according as the wind blew.

'Now a ship coming in to land men must furl her sail. If you wait till you see her men gather up the sail's foot your catapults can jerk a net of loose stones (bolts only cut through the cloth) into the bag of it. Then she turns over, and the sea makes everything clean again. A few men may come ashore, but very few. . . . It was not hard work, except the waiting on the beach in blowing sand and snow. And that was how we dealt with the Winged Hats that winter.

'Early in the Spring, when the East winds blow like skinning-knives, they gathered again off the East end with many ships. Allo told me they

would never rest till they had taken a tower in open fight. Certainly they fought in the open. We dealt with them thoroughly through a long day: and when all was finished, one man dived clear of the wreckage of his ship, and swam towards shore. I waited, and a wave tumbled him at my feet.

'As I stooped, I saw he wore such a medal as I wear.' Parnesius raised his hand to his neck. 'Therefore, when he could speak, I addressed him a certain Question which can only be answered in a certain manner. He answered with the necessary Word—the Word that belongs to the Degree of Gryphons in the science of Mithras my God. I put my shield over him till he could stand up. You see I am not short, but he was a head taller than I. He said: "What now?" I said: "At your pleasure, my brother, to stay or go."

'He looked out across the surf. There remained one ship unhurt, beyond range of our catapults. I checked the catapults and he waved her in. She came as a hound comes to a master. When she was yet a hundred paces from the beach, he flung back his hair, and swam out. They hauled him in, and went away. I knew that those who worship Mithras are many and of all races, so I did not think much more upon the matter.

'A month later I saw Allo with his horses—by the Temple of Pan, O Faun!—and he gave me a great necklace of gold studded with coral.

'At first I thought it was a bribe from some tradesmen in the town—meant for old Rutilianus. "Nay," said Allo. "This is a gift from Amal, that Winged Hat whom you saved on the beach. He says you are a Man."

'"He is a Man, too. Tell him I can wear his gift," I answered.

'"Oh, Amal is a young fool; but, speaking as sensible men, your Emperor is doing such great things in Gaul that the Winged Hats are anxious to be his friends, or, better still, the friends of his servants. They think you and Pertinax could lead them to victories." Allo looked at me like a one-eyed raven.

'"Allo," I said, "you are the corn between the two millstones. Be content if they grind evenly, and don't thrust your hand between them."

'"I?" said Allo. "I hate Rome and the Winged Hats equally; but if the Winged Hats thought that some day you and Pertinax might join them against Maximus, they would leave you in peace while you considered. Time is what we need—you and I and Maximus. Let me carry a pleasant message back to the Winged Hats—something for them to make a council over. We barbarians are all alike. We sit up half the night to discuss anything a Roman says. Eh?"

'"We have no men. We must fight with words," said Pertinax. "Leave it to Allo and me."

'So Allo carried word back to the Winged Hats that we would not fight them if they did not fight us; and they (I think they were a little tired of losing men in the sea) agreed to a sort of truce. I believe Allo, who being a horse-dealer loved lies, also told them we might some day rise against Maximus as Maximus had risen against Rome.

'Indeed, they permitted the corn-ships which I sent to the Picts to pass North that season without harm. Therefore the Picts were well fed that winter, and since they were in some sort my children, I was glad of it. We had only two thousand men on the Wall, and I wrote many times to Maximus and begged—prayed—him to send me only one cohort of my old North British troops. He could not spare them. He needed them to win more victories in Gaul.

'Then came news that he had defeated and slain the Emperor Gratian, and thinking he must now be secure, I wrote again for men. He answered: "You will learn that I have at last settled accounts with the pup Gratian. There was no need that he should have died, but he became confused and lost his head, which is a bad thing to befall any Emperor. Tell your Father I am content to drive two mules only; for unless my old General's son thinks himself destined to destroy me, I shall rest Emperor of Gaul and Britain, and then you, my two children, will presently get

all the men you need. Just now I can spare none."'

'What did he mean by his General's son?' said Dan.

'He meant Theodosius Emperor of Rome, who was the son of Theodosius the General under whom Maximus had fought in the old Pict War. The two men never loved each other, and when Gratian made the younger Theodosius Emperor of the East (at least, so I've heard), Maximus carried on the war to the second generation. It was his fate, and it was his fall. But Theodosius the Emperor is a good man. As I know.' Parnesius was silent for a moment and then continued.

'I wrote back to Maximus that, though we had peace on the Wall, I should be happier with a few more men and some new catapults. He answered: "You must live a little longer under the shadow of my victories, till I can see what young Theodosius intends. He may welcome me as a brother-Emperor, or he may be preparing an army. In either case I cannot spare men just now."'

'But he was always saying that,' cried Una.

'It was true. He did not make excuses; but thanks, as he said, to the news of his victories, we had no trouble on the Wall for a long, long time. The Picts grew fat as their own sheep among the heather, and as many of my men as lived were well exercised in their weapons. Yes, the Wall

looked strong. For myself, I knew how weak we were. I knew that if even a false rumour of any defeat to Maximus broke loose among the Winged Hats, they might come down in earnest, and then —the Wall must go! For the Picts I never cared, but in those years I learned something of the strength of the Winged Hats. They increased their strength every day, but I could not increase my men. Maximus had emptied Britain behind us, and I felt myself to be a man with a rotten stick standing before a broken fence to turn bulls.

'Thus, my friends, we lived on the Wall, waiting—waiting—waiting for the men that Maximus never sent!

'Presently he wrote that he was preparing an army against Theodosius. He wrote—and Pertinax read it over my shoulder in our quarters: "*Tell your Father that my destiny orders me to drive three mules or be torn in pieces by them. I hope within a year to finish with Theodosius, son of Theodosius, once and for all. Then you shall have Britain to rule, and Pertinax, if he chooses, Gaul. To-day I wish strongly you were with me to beat my Auxiliaries into shape. Do not, I pray you, believe any rumour of my sickness. I have a little evil in my old body which I shall cure by riding swiftly into Rome.*

'Said Pertinax: "It is finished with Maximus! He writes as a man without hope. I, a man without hope, can see this. What does he add at the

bottom of the roll? '*Tell Pertinax I have met his late Uncle, the Duumvir of Divio, and that he accounted to me quite truthfully for all his Mother's monies. I have sent her with a fitting escort, for she is the mother of a hero, to Nicæa, where the climate is warm.*'

'"That is proof!" said Pertinax. "Nicæa is not far by sea from Rome. A woman there could take ship and fly to Rome in time of war. Yes, Maximus foresees his death, and is fulfilling his promises one by one. But I am glad my Uncle met him."

'"You think blackly to-day?" I asked.

'"I think truth. The Gods weary of the play we have played against them. Theodosius will destroy Maximus. It is finished!"

'"Will you write him that?" I said.

'"See what I shall write," he answered, and he took pen and wrote a letter cheerful as the light of day, tender as a woman's and full of jests. Even I, reading over his shoulder, took comfort from it till—I saw his face!

'"And now," he said, sealing it, "we be two dead men, my brother. Let us go to the Temple."

'We prayed awhile to Mithras, where we had many times prayed before. After that we lived day by day among evil rumours till winter came again.

'It happened one morning that we rode to the

East Shore, and found on the beach a fair-haired man, half frozen, bound to some broken planks. Turning him over, we saw by his belt-buckle that he was a Goth of an Eastern Legion. Suddenly he opened his eyes and cried loudly: "He is dead! The letters were with me, but the Winged Hats sunk the ship." So saying, he died between our hands.

'We asked not who was dead. We knew! We raced before the driving snow to Hunno, thinking perhaps Allo might be there. We found him already at our stables, and he saw by our faces what we had heard.

'"It was in a tent by the Sea," he stammered. "He was beheaded by Theodosius. He sent a letter to you, written while he waited to be slain. The Winged Hats met the ship and took it. The news is running through the heather like fire. Blame me not! I cannot hold back my young men any more."

'"I would we could say as much for our men," said Pertinax, laughing. "But, Gods be praised, they cannot run away."

'"What do you do?" said Allo. "I bring an order—a message—from the Winged Hats that you join them with your men, and march South to Britain."

'"It grieves me," said Pertinax, "but we are stationed here to stop that thing."

'"If I carry back such an answer they will kill me," said Allo. "I always promised the Winged Hats that you would rise when Maximus fell. —I did not think he could fall."

'"Alas! my poor barbarian," said Pertinax, still laughing. "Well, you have sold us too many good ponies to be thrown back to your friends. We will make you a prisoner, although you are an ambassador."

'"Yes, that will be best," said Allo, holding out a halter. We bound him lightly, for he was an old man.

'"Presently the Winged Hats may come to look for you, and that will give us more time. See how the habit of playing for time sticks to a man!" said Pertinax, as he tied the rope.

'"No," I said. "Time may help. If Maximus wrote us letters while he was a prisoner, Theodosius must have sent the ship that brought it. If he can send ships, he can send men."

'"How will that profit us?" said Pertinax. "We serve Maximus, not Theodosius. Even if by some miracle of the Gods Theodosius down South sent and saved the Wall, we could not expect more than the death Maximus died."

'"It concerns us to defend the Wall, no matter what Emperor dies, or makes die," I said.

'"That is worthy of your brother the philosopher," said Pertinax. "Myself I am without hope,

so I do not say solemn and stupid things! Rouse the Wall!"

'We armed the Wall from end to end; we told the officers that there was a rumour of Maximus's death which might bring down the Winged Hats, but we were sure, even if it were true, that Theodosius, for the sake of Britain, would send us help. Therefore, we must stand fast. . . . My friends, it is above all things strange to see how men bear ill news! Often the strongest till then become the weakest, while the weakest, as it were, reach up and steal strength from the Gods. So it was with us. Yet my Pertinax by his jests and his courtesy and his labours had put heart and training into our poor numbers during the past years—more than I should have thought possible. Even our Libyan Cohort—the Thirds—stood up in their padded cuirasses and did not whimper.

'In three days came seven chiefs and elders of the Winged Hats. Among them was that tall young man, Amal, whom I had met on the beach, and he smiled when he saw my necklace. We made them welcome, for they were ambassadors. We showed them Allo, alive but bound. They thought we had killed him, and I saw it would not have vexed them if we had. Allo saw it too, and it vexed him. Then in our quarters at Hunno we came to Council.

'They said that Rome was falling, and that we

must join them. They offered me all South Britain to govern after they had taken a tribute out of it.

'I answered, "Patience. This Wall is not weighed off like plunder. Give me proof that my General is dead."

'"Nay," said one elder, "prove to us that he lives"; and another said, cunningly, "What will you give us if we read you his last words?"

'"We are not merchants to bargain," cried Amal. "Moreover, I owe this man my life. He shall have his proof." He threw across to me a letter (well I knew the seal) from Maximus.

'"We took this out of the ship we sunk," he cried. "I cannot read, but I know one sign, at least, which makes me believe." He showed me a dark stain on the outer roll that my heavy heart perceived was the valiant blood of Maximus.

'"Read!" said Amal. "Read, and then let us hear whose servants you are!"

'Said Pertinax, very softly, after he had looked through it: "I will read it all. Listen, barbarians!" He read from that which I have carried next my heart ever since.'

Parnesius drew from his neck a folded and spotted piece of parchment, and began in a hushed voice:—

'"*To Parnesius and Pertinax, the not unworthy Captains of the Wall, from Maximus, once Emperor*

of Gaul and Britain, now prisoner waiting death by the sea in the camp of Theodosius—Greeting and Good-bye!"

'"Enough," said young Amal; "there is your proof! You must join us now!"

'Pertinax looked long and silently at him, till that fair man blushed like a girl. Then read Pertinax:—

'"*I have joyfully done much evil in my life to those who have wished me evil, but if ever I did any evil to you two I repent, and I ask your forgiveness. The three mules which I strove to drive have torn me in pieces as your Father prophesied. The naked swords wait at the tent door to give me the death I gave to Gratian. Therefore I, your General and your Emperor, send you free and honourable dismissal from my service, which you entered, not for money or office, but, as it makes me warm to believe, because you loved me!*"

'"By the Light of the Sun," Amal broke in. "This was in some sort a Man! We may have been mistaken in his servants!"

'And Pertinax read on: "*You gave me the time for which I asked. If I have failed to use it, do not lament. We have gambled very splendidly against the Gods, but they hold weighted dice, and I must pay the forfeit. Remember I have been: but Rome is; and Rome will be! Tell Pertinax his Mother is in safety at Nicœa, and her monies are in charge of the Prefect at Antipolis. Make my remembrances to your Father*

and to your Mother, whose friendship was great gain to me. Give also to my little Picts and to the Winged Hats such messages as their thick heads can understand. I would have sent you three Legions this very day if all had gone aright. Do not forget me. We have worked together. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!"

'Now, that was my Emperor's last letter. (The children heard the parchment crackle as Parnesius returned it to its place.)

'"I was mistaken," said Amal. "The servants of such a man will sell nothing except over the sword. I am glad of it." He held out his hand to me.

'"But Maximus has given you your dismissal," said an elder. "You are certainly free to serve—or to rule—whom you please. Join—do not follow—join us!"

'"We thank you," said Pertinax. "But Maximus tells us to give you such messages as——pardon me, but I use his words—your thick heads can understand." He pointed through the door to the foot of a catapult wound up.

'"We understand," said an elder. "The Wall must be won at a price?"

'"It grieves me," said Pertinax, laughing, "but so it must be won," and he gave them of our best Southern wine.

'They drank, and wiped their yellow beards in silence till they rose to go.

'Said Amal, stretching himself (for they were barbarians), "We be a goodly company; I wonder what the ravens and the dogfish will make of some of us before this snow melts."

'"Think rather what Theodosius may send." I answered; and though they laughed, I saw that my chance shot troubled them.

'Only old Allo lingered behind a little.

'"You see," he said, winking and blinking, "I am no more than their dog. When I have shown their men the secret short ways across our bogs, they will kick me like one."

'"Then I should not be in haste to show them those ways," said Pertinax, "till I were sure that Rome could not save the Wall."

'"You think so? Woe is me?" said the old man. "I only wanted peace for my people," and he went out stumbling through the snow behind the tall Winged Hats.

'In this fashion, then, slowly, a day at a time, which is very bad for doubting troops, the War came upon us. At first the Winged Hats swept in from the sea as they had done before, and there we met them as before—with the catapults; and they sickened of it. Yet for a long time they would not trust their duck-legs on land, and I think when it came to revealing the secrets of the tribe, the little Picts were afraid or ashamed to show them all the roads across the heather. I had this from a

Pict prisoner. They were as much our spies as our enemies, for the Winged Hats oppressed them, and took their winter stores. Ah, foolish Little People!

'Then the Winged Hats began to roll us up from each end of the Wall. I sent runners Southward to see what the news might be in Britain; but the wolves were very bold that winter among the deserted stations where the troops had once been, and none came back. We had trouble too with the forage for the ponies along the Wall. I kept ten, and so did Pertinax. We lived and slept in the saddle riding east or west, and we ate our worn-out ponies. The people of the town also made us some trouble till I gathered them all in one quarter behind Hunno. We broke down the Wall on either side of it to make as it were a citadel. Our men fought better in close order.

'By the end of the second month we were deep in the War as a man is deep in a snow-drift or in a dream. I think we fought in our sleep. At least I know I have gone on the Wall and come off again, remembering nothing between, though my throat was harsh with giving orders, and my sword, I could see, had been used.

'The Winged Hats fought like wolves—all in a pack. Where they had suffered most, there they charged in most hotly. This was hard for the defender, but it held them from sweeping on into Britain.

'In those days Pertinax and I wrote on the plaster of the bricked archway into Valentia the names of the towers, and the days on which they fell one by one. We wished for some record.

'And the fighting? The fight was always hottest to left and right of the great Statue of Roma Dea, near to Rutilianus' house. By the light of the Sun, that old fat man, whom we had not considered at all, grew young again among the trumpets! I remember he said his sword was an oracle! "Let us consult the Oracle," he would say, and put the handle against his ear, and shake his head wisely. "And *this* day is allowed Rutilianus to live," he would say, and, tucking up his cloak, he would puff and pant and fight well. Oh, there were jests in plenty on the Wall to take the place of food!

'We endured for two months and seventeen days—always being pressed from three sides into a smaller space. Several times Allo sent in word that help was at hand. We did not believe it, but it cheered our men.

'The end came not with shoutings of joy, but, like the rest, as in a dream. The Winged Hats suddenly left us in peace for one night, and the next day; which is too long for spent men. We slept at first lightly, expecting to be roused, and then like logs, each where he lay. May you never need such sleep! When I waked our towers were

full of strange, armed men, who watched us snoring. I roused Pertinax, and we leaped up together.

'"What?" said a young man in clean armour. "Do you fight against Theodosius? Look!"

'North we looked over the red snow. No Winged Hats were there. South we looked over the white snow, and behold there were the Eagles of two strong Legions encamped. East and west we saw flame and fighting, but by Hunno all was still.

'"Trouble no more," said the young man. "Rome's arm is long. Where are the Captains of the Wall?"

'We said we were those men.

'"But you are old and grey-haired," he cried. "Maximus said that they were boys."

'"Yes that was true some years ago," said Pertinax. "What is our fate to be, you fine and well-fed child?"

'"I am called Ambrosius, a secretary of the Emperor," he answered. "Show me a certain letter which Maximus wrote from a tent at Aquileia, and perhaps I will believe."

'I took it from my breast, and when he had read it he saluted us, saying: "Your fate is in your own hands. If you choose to serve Theodosius, he will give you a Legion. If it suits you to go to your homes, we will give you a Triumph."

'"I would like better a bath, wine, food, razors, soaps, oils, and scents," said Pertinax, laughing.

'"Oh, I see you are a boy," said Ambrosius. "And you?" turning to me.

'"We bear no ill-will against Theodosius, but in War——" I began.

'"In War it is as it is in Love," said Pertinax. "Whether she be good or bad, one gives one's best once, to one only. That given, there remains no second worth giving or taking."

'"That is true," said Ambrosius. "I was with Maximus before he died. He warned Theodosius that you would never serve him, and frankly I say I am sorry for my Emperor."

'"He has Rome to console him," said Pertinax. "I ask you of your kindness to let us go to our homes and get this smell out of our nostrils."

'None the less they gave us a Triumph!'

'It was well earned,' said Puck, throwing some leaves into the still water of the marlpit. The black, oily circles spread dizzily as the children watched them.

'I want to know, oh, ever so many things,' said Dan. 'What happened to old Allo? Did the Winged Hats ever come back? And what did Amal do?'

'And what happened to the fat old General with

the five cooks,' said Una. 'And what did your Mother say when you came home?' . . .

'She'd say you're settin' too long over this old pit, so late as 'tis already,' said old Hobden's voice behind them. 'Hst!' he whispered.

He stood still, for not twenty paces away a magnificent dog-fox sat on his haunches and looked at the children as though he were an old friend of theirs.

'Oh, Mus' Reynolds, Mus' Reynolds!' said Hobden, under his breath. 'If I knowed all was inside your head, I'd know something wuth knowin'. Mus' Dan an' Miss Una, come along o' me while I lock up my liddle hen-house.'

A PICT SONG

Rome never looks where she treads,
Always her heavy hooves fall,
On our stomachs, our hearts or our heads;
And Rome never heeds when we bawl.
Her sentries pass on—that is all,
And we gather behind them in hordes,
And plot to reconquer the Wall,
With only our tongues for our swords.

We are the Little Folk—we!
Too little to love or to hate.
Leave us alone and you'll see
How we can drag down the Great!
We are the worm in the wood!
We are the rot at the root!
We are the germ in the blood!
We are the thorn in the foot!

Mistletoe killing an oak—
Rats gnawing cables in two—
Moths making holes in a cloak—
How they must love what they do!

Yes,—and we Little Folk too,
We are as busy as they—
Working our works out of view—
Watch, and you'll see it some day!

No indeed! We are not strong,
But we know Peoples that are.
Yes, and we'll guide them along,
To smash and destroy you in War!
We shall be slaves just the same?
Yes, we have always been slaves;
But you—you will die of the shame,
And then we shall dance on your graves!

We are the Little Folk, we! etc.

HAL O' THE DRAFT

Prophets have honour all over the Earth,
Except in the village where they were born;
Where such as knew them boys from birth,
Nature-ally hold 'em in scorn.

When Prophets are naughty and young and vain,
They make a won'erful grievance of it;
(You can see by their writings how they complain),
But O, 'tis won'erful good for the Prophet!

There's nothing Nineveh Town can give,
(Nor being swallowed by whales between),
Makes up for the place where a man's folk live,
That don't care nothing what he has been.
He might ha' been that, or he might ha' been this,
But they love and they hate him for what he is!

HAL O' THE DRAFT

A RAINY afternoon drove Dan and Una over to play pirates in the Little Mill. If you don't mind rats on the rafters and oats in your shoes, the mill-attic, with its trap-doors and inscriptions on beams about floods and sweethearts, is a splendid place. It is lighted by a foot-square window, called Duck Window, that looks across to Little Lindens Farm, and the spot where Jack Cade was killed.

When they had climbed the attic ladder (they called it the 'mainmast tree' out of the ballad of Sir Andrew Barton, and Dan 'swarved it with might and main,' as the ballad says) they saw a man sitting on Duck window-sill. He was dressed in a plum-coloured doublet and tight plum-coloured hose, and he drew busily in a red-edged book.

'Sit ye! Sit ye!' Puck cried from a rafter overhead 'See what it is to be beautiful! Sir Harry Dawe—pardon, Hal—says I am the very image of a head for a gargoyle.'

The man laughed and raised his dark velvet cap to the children, and his grizzled hair bristled out in a stormy fringe. He was old—forty at least—but his eyes were young, with funny little wrinkles all round them. A satchel of embroidered leather hung from his broad belt, which looked interesting.

'May we see?' said Una, coming forward.

'Surely—sure-ly!' he said, moving up on the window-seat, and returned to his work with a silver-pointed pencil. Puck sat as though the grin were fixed for ever on his broad face, while they watched the quick, certain fingers that copied it. Presently the man took a reed pen from his satchel, and trimmed it with a little ivory knife, carved in the semblance of a fish.

'Oh, what a beauty!' cried Dan.

''Ware fingers!' That blade is perilous sharp. I made it myself of the best Low Country cross-bow steel. And so, too, this fish. When his back-fin travels to his tail—so—he swallows up the blade, even as the whale swallowed Gaffer Jonah. . . . Yes, and that's my ink-horn. I made the four silver saints round it. Press Barnabas's head. It opens, and then——' He dipped the trimmed pen, and with careful boldness began to put in the essential lines of Puck's rugged face, that had been but faintly revealed by the silver-point.

The children gasped, for it fairly leaped from the page.

As he worked, and the rain fell on the tiles, he talked—now clearly, now muttering, now breaking off to frown or smile at his work. He told them he was born at Little Lindens Farms, and his father used to beat him for drawing things instead of doing things, till an old priest called Father Roger, who drew illuminated letters in rich people's books, coaxed the parents to let him take the boy as a sort of painter's apprentice. Then he went with Father Roger to Oxford, where he cleaned plates and carried cloaks and shoes for the scholars of a College called Merton.

'Didn't you hate that?' said Dan after a great many other questions.

'I never thought on't. Half Oxford was building new colleges or beautifying the old, and she had called to her aid the mastercraftsmen of all Christendie—kings in their trade and honoured of Kings. I knew them. I worked for them: that was enough No wonder——' He stopped and laughed.

'You became a great man,' said Puck.

'They said so, Robin. Even Bramante said so.'

'Why? What did you do?' Dan asked.

The artist looked at him queerly. 'Things in stone and such, up and down England. You would not have heard of 'em. To come nearer home, I re-builded this little St. Bartholomew's church of ours It cost me more trouble and sorrow than

aught I've touched in my life. But 'twas a sound lesson.'

'Um,' said Dan. 'We had lessons this morning.'

'I'll not afflict ye, lad,' said Hal, while Puck roared. 'Only 'tis strange to think how that little church was re-built, re-roofed, and made glorious, thanks to some few godly Sussex iron-masters, a Bristol sailor lad, a proud ass called Hal o' the Draft because, d'you see, he was always drawing and drafting; and'—he dragged the words slowly —'*and* a Scotch pirate.'

'Pirate?' said Dan. He wriggled like a hooked fish.

'Even that Andrew Barton you were singing of on the stair just now.' He dipped again in the ink-well, and held his breath over a sweeping line, as though he had forgotten everything else.

'Pirates don't build churches, do they?' said Dan. 'Or *do* they?'

'They help mightily,' Hal laughed. 'But you were at your lessons this morn, Jack Scholar?'

'Oh, pirates aren't lessons. It was only Bruce and his silly old spider,' said Una. 'Why did Sir Andrew Barton help you?'

'I question if he ever knew it,' said Hal, twinkling. 'Robin, how a-mischief's name am I to tell these innocents what comes of sinful pride?'

'Oh, we know all about *that*,' said Una pertly.

'If you get too beany—that's cheeky—you get sat upon, of course.'

Hal considered a moment, pen in air, and Puck said some long words.

'Aha! That was my case too,' he cried. 'Beany—you say—but certainly I did not conduct myself well. I was proud of—of such things as porches—a Galilee porch at Lincoln for choice—proud of one Torrigiano's arm on my shoulder, proud of my knighthood when I made the gilt scroll-word for *The Sovereign*—our King's ship. But Father Roger sitting in Merton Library, he did not forget me. At the top of my pride, when I and no other should have builded the porch at Lincoln, he laid it on me with a terrible forefinger to go back to my Sussex clays and re-build, at my own charges, my own church, where we Dawes have been buried for six generations. "Out! Son of my Art!" said he. "Fight the Devil at home ere you call yourself a man and a craftsman." And I quaked, and I went. . . . How's yon, Robin?' He flourished the finished sketch before Puck.

'Me! Me past peradventure,' said Puck, smirking like a man at a mirror. 'Ah, see! The rain has took off! I hate housen in daylight.'

'Whoop! Holiday!' cried Hal, leaping up. 'Who's for my Little Lindens? We can talk there.'

They tumbled downstairs, and turned past the dripping willows by the sunny mill dam.

'Body o' me,' said Hal, staring at the hop-garden, where the hops were just ready to blossom. 'What are these vines? No, not vines, and they twine the wrong way to beans.' He began to draw in his ready book.

'Hops. New since your day,' said Puck. 'They're an herb of Mars, and their flowers dried flavour ale. We say:—

> '"Turkeys, Heresy, Hops, and Beer
> Came into England all in one year."'

'Heresy I know. I've seen Hops—God be praised for their beauty! What is your Turkis?'

The children laughed. They knew the Lindens turkeys, and as soon as they reached Lindens' orchard on the hill the flock charged at them.

Out came Hal's book at once. 'Hoity-toity!' he cried. 'Here's Pride in purple feathers! Here's wrathy contempt and the Pomps of the Flesh! How d'you call *them?*'

'Turkeys! Turkeys!' the children shouted, as the old gobbler raved and flamed against Hal's plum-coloured hose.

'Save Your Magnificence!' he said. 'I've drafted two good new things to-day.' And he doffed his cap to the bubbling bird.

Then they walked through the grass to the knoll where Little Lindens stands. The old farm-house, weather-tiled to the ground, took almost the colour of a blood-ruby in the afternoon light. The pigeons pecked at the mortar in the chimney-stacks; the bees that had lived under the tiles since it was built filled the hot August air with their booming; and the smell of the box-tree by the dairy-window mixed with the smell of earth after rain, bread after baking, and a tickle of wood-smoke.

The farmer's wife came to the door, baby on arm, shaded her brows against the sun, stooped to pluck a sprig of rosemary, and turned down the orchard. The old spaniel in his barrel barked once or twice to show he was in charge of the empty house. Puck clicked back the garden-gate.

'D'you marvel that I love it?' said Hal, in a whisper. 'What can town folk know of the nature of housen—or land?'

They perched themselves arow on the old hacked oak bench in Lindens' garden, looking across the valley of the brook at the fern-covered dimples and hollows of the Forge behind Hobden's cottage. The old man was cutting a faggot in his garden by the hives. It was quite a second after his chopper fell that the chump of the blow reached their lazy ears.

'Eh—yeh!' said Hal. 'I mind when where

that old gaffer stands was Nether Forge—Master John Collins's foundry. Many a night has his big trip-hammer shook me in my bed here. *Boom-bitty! Boom-bitty!* If the wind was east, I could hear Master Tom Collins's forge at Stockens answering his brother, *Boom-oop! Boom-oop!* and midway between, Sir John Pelham's sledge-hammers at Brightling would strike in like a pack o' scholars, and "*Hic-haec-hoc*" they'd say, "*Hic-haec-hoc*," till I fell asleep. Yes. The valley was as full o' forges and fineries as a May shaw o' cuckoos. All gone to grass now!'

'What did they make?' said Dan.

'Guns for the King's ships—and for others. Serpentines and cannon mostly. When the guns were cast, down would come the King's Officers, and take our plough-oxen to haul them to the coast. Look! Here's one of the first and finest craftsmen of the Sea!'

He fluttered back a page of his book, and showed them a young man's head. Underneath was written: 'Sebastianus.'

'He came down with a King's Order on Master John Collins for twenty serpentines (wicked little cannon they be!) to furnish a venture of ships. I drafted him thus sitting by our fire telling Mother of the new lands he'd find the far side the world. And he found them, too! There's a nose to cleave through unknown seas! Cabot was his name—a

Bristol lad—half a foreigner. I set a heap by him. He helped me to my church-building.'

'I thought that was Sir Andrew Barton,' said Dan.

'Ay, but foundations before roofs,' Hal answered. 'Sebastian first put me in the way of it. I had come down here, not to serve God as a craftsman should, but to show my people how great a craftsman I was. They cared not, and it served me right, one split straw for my craft or my greatness. What a murrain call had I, they said, to mell with old St. Barnabas's? Ruinous the church had been since the Black Death, and ruinous she should remain; and I could hang myself in my new scaffold-ropes! Gentle and simple, high and low —the Hayes, the Fowles, the Fanners, and the Collinses—they were all in a tale against me. Only Sir John Pelham up yonder to Brightling bade me heart-up and go on. Yet how could I? Did I ask Master Collins for his timber-tug to haul beams? The oxen had gone to Lewes after lime. Did he promise me a set of iron clamps or ties for the roof? They never came to hand, or else they were spaulty or cracked. So with everything. Nothing said, but naught done except I stood by them, and then done amiss. I thought the countryside was fair bewitched.'

'It was, sure-ly,' said Puck, knees under chin. 'Did you never suspect any one?'

'Not till Sebastian came for his guns, and John

Collins played him the same dog's tricks as he'd played me with my ironwork. Week in, week out, two or three serpentines would be flawed in the casting, and only fit, they said, to be remelted. Then John Collins would shake his head, and vow he could pass no cannon for the King's service that were not perfect. Saints! How Sebastian stormed! *I* know, for we sat on this bench sharing our sorrows inter-common.

'When Sebastian had fumed away six weeks at Lindens and gotten just six serpentines, Dirk Brenzett, Master of the *Cygnet* hoy, sends me word that the block of stone he was fetching me from France for our new font he'd hove overboard to lighten his ship, chased by Andrew Barton up to Rye Port.'

'Ah! The pirate!' said Dan.

'Yes. And while I am tearing my hair over this, Ticehurst Will, my best mason, comes to me shaking, and vowing that the Devil, horned, tailed, and chained, has run out on him from the church-tower, and the men would work there no more. So I took 'em off the foundations, which we were strengthening, and went into the Bell Tavern for a cup of ale. Says Master John Collins: "Have it your own way, lad; but if I was you, I'd take the sinnification o' the sign, and leave old Barnabas's Church alone!" And they all wagged their sinful heads, and agreed. Less afraid of the Devil than of me—as I saw later.

'When I brought my sweet news to Lindens, Sebastian was limewashing the kitchen-beams for Mother. He loved her like a son.

'"Cheer up, lad," he says. "God's where He was. Only you and I chance to be pure pute asses! We've been tricked, Hal, and more shame to me, a sailor, that I did not guess it before! You must leave your belfry alone, forsooth, because the Devil is adrift there; and I cannot get my serpentines because John Collins cannot cast them aright. Meantime Andrew Barton hawks off the Port of Rye. And why? To take those very serpentines, which poor Cabot must whistle for; the said serpentines, I'll wager my share of new Continents, being now hid away in St. Barnabas church tower. Clear as the Irish coast at noonday!"

'"They'd sure never dare to do it," I said; "and for another thing, selling cannon to the King's enemies is black treason--hanging and fine."

'"It is sure large profit. Men'll dare any gallows for that. I have been a trader myself," says he. "We must be upsides with 'em for the honour of Bristol."

'Then he hatched a plot, sitting on the limewash bucket. We gave out to ride o' Tuesday to London and made a show of making farewells of our friends—especially of Master John Collins. But at Wadhurst Woods we turned; rode by night to the watermeadows; hid our horses in a

willow-lot at the foot of the glebe, and stole a-tiptoe up hill to Barnabas's church again. A thick mist, and a moon coming through.

'I had no sooner locked the tower-door behind us than over goes Sebastian full length in the dark.

'"Pest!" he says. "Step high and feel low, Hal. I've stumbled over guns before."

'I groped, and one by one—the tower was pitchy dark—I counted the lither barrels of twenty serpentines laid out on pease-straw. No conceal at all!

'"There's two demi-cannon my end," says Sebastian, slapping metal. They'll be for Andrew Barton's lower deck. Honest—honest John Collins! So this is his warehouse, his arsenal, his armoury! Now, see you why your pokings and pryings have raised the Devil in Sussex? You've hindered John's lawful trade for months," and he laughed where he lay.

'A clay-cold tower is no fireside at midnight, so we climbed the belfry stairs, and there Sebastian trips over a cow-hide with its horns and tail.

'"Aha! Your Devil has left his doublet! Does it become me, Hal?" He draws it on and capers in the slits of window-moonlight—won'erful devilish-like. Then he sits on the stair rapping with his tail on a board, and his back-aspect was dreader than his front; and a howlet lit in, and screeched at the horns of him.

'"If you'd keep out the Devil, shut the door," he whispered. "And that's another false proverb, Hal, for I can hear your tower-door opening."

'"I locked it. Who a plague has another key, then?" I said.

'"All the congregation, to judge by their feet," he says, and peers into the blackness. "Still! Still, Hal! Hear 'em grunt! That's more o' my serpentines. I'll be bound. One—two—three—four they bear in! Faith, Andrew equips himself like an admiral! Twenty-four serpentines in all!"

'As if it had been an echo, we heard John Collins' voice come up all hollow: "Twenty-four serpentines and two demi-cannon. That's the full tally for Sir Andrew Barton."

'"Courtesy costs naught," whispers Sebastian. "Shall I drop my dagger on his head?"

'"They go over to Rye o' Thursday in the woolwains, hid under the wool packs. Dirk Brenzett meets them at Udimore, as before," says John.

'"Lord! What a worn, handsmooth trade it is!" says Sebastian. "I lay we are the sole two babes in the village that have not our lawful share in the venture."

'There was a full score folk below, talking like all Robertsbridge Market. We counted them by voice.

'Master John Collins pipes: "The guns for the French carrack must lie here next month. Will, when does your young fool (me, so please you!) come back from Lunnon?"

'"No odds," I heard Ticehurst Will answer. "Lay 'em just where you've a mind, Mus' Collins. We're all too afraid o' the Devil to mell with the tower now." And the long knave laughed.

'"Ah! 'tis easy enow for you to raise the Devil, Will," says another—Ralph Hobden from the Forge.

'"Aaa-men!" roars Sebastian, and ere I could hold him, he leaps down the stairs—won'erful devilish-like—howling no bounds. He had scarce time to lay out for the nearest than they ran. Saints, how they ran! We heard them pound on the door of the Bell Tavern, and then we ran too.

'"What's next?" says Sebastian, looping up his cow-tail as he leaped the briars. "I've broke honest John's face."

'"Ride to Sir John Pelham's," I said. "He is the only one that ever stood by me."

'We rode to Brightling, and past Sir John's lodge, where the keepers would have shot at us for deer-stealers, and we had Sir John down into his Justice's chair, and when we had told him our tale and showed him the cow-hide which Sebastian wore still girt about him, he laughed till the tears ran.

'"Wel-a-well!" he says. "I'll see justice done before daylight. What's your complaint? Master Collins is my old friend."

'"He's none of mine," I cried. "When I think how he and his likes have baulked and dozened and cozened me at every turn over the church"——and I choked at the thought.

'"Ah, but ye see now they needed it for another use," says he, smoothly.

'"So they did my serpentines," Sebastian cries. "I should be half across the Western Ocean by this if my guns had been ready. But they're sold to a Scotch pirate by your old friend."

'"Where's your proof?" says Sir John, stroking his beard.

'"I broke my shins over them not an hour since, and I heard John give order where they were to be taken," says Sebastian.

'"Words! Words only," says Sir John. "Master Collins is somewhat of a liar at best."

'He carried it so gravely, that for the moment, I thought he was dipped in this secret traffick too, and that there was not an honest ironmaster in Sussex.

'"Name o' Reason!" says Sebastian, and raps with his cow-tail on the table, "Whose guns are they, then?"

'"Yours, manifestly," says Sir John. "You come with the King's Order for 'em, and Master

Collins casts them in his foundry. If he chooses to bring them up from Nether Forge and lay 'em out in the church tower, why they are e'en so much the nearer to the main road and you are saved a day's hauling. What a coil to make of a mere act of neighbourly kindness, lad!"

'"I fear I have requited him very scurvily," says Sebastian, looking at his knuckles. "But what of the demi-cannon? I could do with 'em well, but *they* are not in the King's Order."

'"Kindness—loving-kindness," says Sir John. "Questionless, in his zeal for the King and his love for you, John adds those two cannon as a gift. 'Tis plain as this coming daylight, ye stockfish!"

'"So it is," says Sebastian. "Oh, Sir John, Sir John, why did you never use the sea? You are lost ashore." And he looked on him with great love.

'"I do my best in my station." Sir John strokes his beard again and rolls forth his deep drumming Justice's voice thus:—"But—suffer me!—you two lads, on some midnight frolic into which I probe not, roystering around the taverns, surprise Master Collins at his"—he thinks a moment—"at his good deeds done by stealth. Ye surprise him, I say, cruelly."

'"Truth, Sir John. If you had seen him run!" says Sebastian.

'"On this you ride breakneck to me with a tale

of pirates, and wool-wains, and cow-hides, which, though it hath moved my mirth as a man, offendeth my reason as a magistrate. So I will e'en accompany you back to the tower with, perhaps, some few of my own people, and three to four wagons, and I'll be your warrant that Master John Collins will freely give you your guns and your demi-cannon, Master Sebastian." He breaks into his proper voice—"I warned the old tod and his neighbours long ago that they'd come to trouble with their side-sellings and bye-dealings; but we cannot have half Sussex hanged for a little gun-running. Are ye content, lads?"

'"I'd commit any treason for two demi-cannon," said Sebastian, and rubs his hands.

'"Ye have just compounded with rank treason-felony for the same bribe," says Sir John. Wherefore to horse, and get the guns."'

'But Master Collins meant the guns for Sir Andrew Barton all along, didn't he?' said Dan.

'Questionless, that he did,' said Hal. 'But he lost them. We poured into the village on the red edge of dawn, Sir John horsed, in half-armour, his pennon flying; behind him thirty stout Brightling knaves, five abreast; behind them four wool-wains, and behind them four trumpets to triumph over the jest, blowing: *Our King went forth to Normandie.* When we halted and rolled the ringing guns out of the tower, 'twas for all the world like

Friar Roger's picture of the French siege in the Queen's Missal-book.'

'And what did we—I mean, what did our village do?' said Dan.

'Oh! Bore it nobly—nobly,' cried Hal. 'Though they had tricked me, I was proud of us. They came out of their housen, looked at that little army as though it had been a post, and went their shut-mouthed way. Never a sign! Never a word! They'd ha' perished sooner than let Brightling overcrow us. Even that villain, Ticehurst Will, coming out of the Bell for his morning ale, he all but ran under Sir John's horse.

'"Ware, Sirrah Devil!" cries Sir John, reining back.

'"Oh!" says Will. "Market day, is it? And all the bullocks from Brightling here?"

'I spared him his belting for that—the brazen knave!

'But John Collins was our masterpiece! He happened along-street (his jaw tied up where Sebastian had clouted him) when we were trundling the first demi-cannon through the lych-gate.

'"I reckon you'll find her middlin' heavy," he says. "If you've a mind to pay, I'll loan ye my timber-tug. She won't lie easy on ary wool-wain."

'That was the one time I ever saw Sebastian taken flat aback. He opened and shut his mouth, fishy-like.

'"No offence," says Master John. "You've got her reasonable good cheap. I thought ye might not grudge me a groat if I help move her." Ah, he was a masterpiece! They say that morning's work cost our John two hundred pounds, and he never winked an eyelid, not even when he saw the guns all carted off to Lewes.'

'Neither then nor later?' said Puck.

'Once. 'Twas after he gave St. Barnabas the new chime of bells. (Oh, there was nothing the Collinses, or the Hayes, or the Fowles, or the Fanners would not do for the church then! "Ask and have" was their song.) We had rung 'em in, and he was in the tower with Black Nick Fowle, that gave us our rood-screen. The old man pinches the bell-rope one hand and scratches his neck with t'other. "Sooner she was pulling yon clapper than my neck," he says. That was all! That was Sussex—seely Sussex for everlastin'!'

'And what happened after?' said Una.

'I went back into England,' said Hal, slowly. 'I'd had my lesson against pride. But they tell me I left St. Barnabas's a jewel—just about a jewel! Wel-a-well! 'Twas done for and among my own people, and—I ather Roger was right—I never knew such trouble or such triumph since. That's the nature o' things. A dear—dear land.' He dropped his chin on his chest.

'There's your Father at the Forge. What's he

talking to old Hobden about?' said Puck, opening his hand with three leaves in it.

Dan looked towards the cottage.

'Oh, I know. It's that old oak lying across the brook. Pater always wants it grubbed.'

In the still valley they could hear old Hobden's deep tones.

'Have it *as* you've a mind to,' he was saying. 'But the vivers of her roots they hold the bank together. If you grub her out, the bank she'll all come tearin' down, an' next floods the brook'll swarve up. But have it *as* you've a mind. The mistuss she sets a heap by the ferns on her trunk.'

'Oh! I'll think it over,' said the Pater.

Una laughed a little bubbling chuckle.

'What Devil's in *that* belfry?' said Hal, with a lazy laugh. 'That should be Hobden by his voice.'

'Why, the oak is the regular bridge for all the rabbits between the Three Acre and our meadow. The best place for wires on the farm, Hobden says. He's got two there now,' Una answered. '*He* won't ever let it be grubbed!'

'Ah, Sussex! Silly Sussex for everlastin',' murmured Hal; and the next moment their Father's voice calling across to Little Lindens broke the spell as St. Barnabas's clock struck five.

A SMUGGLERS' SONG

If you wake at midnight, and hear a horse's feet,
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street,
Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie.
Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!

Five and twenty ponies
Trotting through the dark;
Brandy for the Parson,
'Baccy for the Clerk
Laces for a lady, letters for a spy,
And watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!

Running round the woodlump if you chance to find
Little barrels, roped and tarred, all full of brandy-wined;
Don't you shout to come and look, nor take 'em for your play;
Put the brishwood back again,—and they'll be gone next day!

If you see the stableyard setting open wide;
If you see a tied horse lying down inside;
If your mother mends a coat cut about and tore;
If the lining's wet and warm—don't you ask no more!

If you meet King George's men, dressed in blue and red,
You be careful what you say, and mindful what is said.
If they call you 'pretty maid,' and chuck you 'neath the chin,
Don't you tell where no one is, nor yet where no one's been!

Knocks and footsteps round the house—whistles after dark—
You've no call for running out till the house-dogs bark.
Trusty's *here, and* Pincher's *here, and see how dumb they lie—*
They *don't fret to follow when the Gentlemen go by!*

If you do as you've been told, likely there's a chance,
You'll be give a dainty doll, all the way from France,
With a cap of Valenciennes, and a velvet hood—
A present from the Gentlemen, along o' being good!

Five and twenty ponies,
Trotting through the Park—
Brandy for the Parson,
'Baccy for the Clerk.

Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie,
Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!

THE BEE BOY'S SONG

Bees! Bees! Hark to the Bees!
'Hide from your neighbors as much as you please,
But all that has happened to *us* you must tell!
Or else we will give you no honey to sell.'

A maiden in her glory,
Upon her wedding-day,
Must tell her Bees the story,
Or else they'll fly away..
Fly away—die away—
Dwindle down and leave you!
But if you don't deceive your Bees,
Your Bees will not deceive you!—

Marriage, birth or buryin',
News across the seas,
All you're sad or merry in,
You must tell the Bees.
Tell 'em coming in an' out,
Where the Fanners fan,
'Cause the Bees are justabout
As curious as a man!

Don't you wait where trees are,
When the lightnings play;
Nor don't you hate where Bees are,
Or else they'll pine away.
Pine away—dwine away—
Anything to leave you!
But if you never grieve your Bees,
Your Bees'll never grieve you.

'DYMCHURCH FLIT'

'DYMCHURCH FLIT'

JUST at dusk, a soft September rain began to fall on the hop-pickers. The mothers wheeled the bouncing perambulators out of the gardens; bins were put away, and tally-books made up. The young couples strolled home, two to each umbrella, and the single men walked behind them laughing. Dan and Una, who had been picking after their lessons, marched off to roast potatoes at the oast-house, where old Hobden, with Blue-eyed Bess, his lurcher-dog, lived all the month through, drying the hops.

They settled themselves, as usual, on the sack-strewn cot in front of the fires, and, when Hobden drew up the shutter, stared, as usual, at the flameless bed of coals spouting its heat up the dark well of the old-fashioned roundel. Slowly he cracked off a few fresh pieces of coal, packed them, with fingers that never flinched, exactly where they would do most good; slowly he reached behind him till Dan tilted the potatoes into his iron scoop of a hand; carefully he arranged them

round the fire, and then stood for a moment, black against the glare. As he closed the shutter, the oast-house seemed dark before the day's end, and he lit the candle in the lanthorn. The children liked all these things because they knew them so well.

The Bee Boy, Hobden's son, who is not quite right in his head, though he can do anything with bees, slipped in like a shadow. They only guessed it when Bess's stump-tail wagged against them.

A big voice began singing outside in the drizzle:—

'Old Mother Laidinwool had nigh twelve months been dead,
She heard the hops were doing well, and then popped up her head.'

'There can't be two people made to holler like that!' cried old Hobden, wheeling round.

'For, says she, "The boys I've picked with when I was young and fair,
They're bound to be at hoppin', and I'm——" '

A man showed at the doorway.

'Well, well! They do say hoppin'll draw the very deadest; and now I belieft 'em. You, Tom? Tom Shoesmith!' Hobden lowered his lanthorn.

'You're a hem of a time makin' your mind to it, Ralph!' The stranger strode in—three full inches taller than Hobden, a grey-whiskered, brown-

faced giant with clear blue eyes. They shook hands, and the children could hear the hard palms rasp together.

'You ain't lost none o' your grip,' said Hobden. 'Was it thirty or forty year back you broke my head at Peasmarsh Fair?'

'Only thirty, an' no odds 'tween us regardin' heads neither. You had it back at me with a hop-pole. How did we get home that night? Swimmin'?'

'Same way the pheasant come into Gubbs's pocket—by a little luck an' a deal o' coniurin'.' Old Hobden laughed in his deep chest.

'I see you've not forgot your way about the woods. D'ye do any 'o *this* still?' The stranger pretended to look along a gun.

Hobden answered with a quick movement of the hand as though he were pegging down a rabbit-wire.

'No. *That's* all that's left me now. Age she must as Age she can. An' what's your news since all these years?'

> 'Oh, I've bin to Plymouth, I've bin to Dover—
> I've bin ramblin', boys, the wide world over,'

the man answered cheerily. 'I reckon I know as much of Old England as most.' He turned towards the children and winked boldly.

'I lay they told you a sight 'o lies, then. I've been into England fur as Wiltsheer once. I was cheated proper over a pair of hedging-gloves,' said Hobden.

'There's fancy-talkin' everywhere. *You've* cleaved to your own parts pretty middlin' close, Ralph.'

'Can't shift an old tree 'thout it dyin',' Hobden chuckled. 'An' I be no more anxious to die than you look to be to held me with my hops to-night.'

The great man leaned against the brickwork of the roundel, and swung his arms abroad. 'Hire me!' was all he said, and they stumped upstairs laughing.

The children heard their shovels rasp on the cloth where the yellow hops lie drying above the fires, and all the oast-house filled with the sweet, sleepy smell as they were turned.

'Who is it?' Una whispered to the Bee Boy.

'Dunno, no more'n you—if *you* dunno,' said he, and smiled.

The voices on the drying-floor talked and chuckled together, and the heavy footsteps went back and forth. Presently a hop-pocket dropped through the press-hole overhead, and stiffened and fattened as they shovelled it full. 'Clank!' went the press, and rammed the loose stuff into tight cake.

'Gently!' they heard Hobden cry. 'You'll bust her crop if you lay on so. You be as careless as Gleason's bull, Tom. Come an' sit by the fires. She'll do now.'

They came down, and as Hobden opened the shutter to see if the potatoes were done Tom Shoesmith said to the children, 'Put a plenty salt on 'em. That'll show you the sort o' man *I* be.' Again he winked, and again the Bee Boy laughed and Una stared at Dan.

'*I* know what sort o' man you be,' old Hobden grunted, groping for the potatoes round the fire.

'Do ye?' Tom went on behind his back. 'Some of us can't abide Horseshoes, or Church Bells, or Running Water; an' talkin' o' runnin' water'—he turned to Hobden, who was backing out of the roundel—'d' you mind the great floods at Robertsbridge, when the miller's man was drowned in the street?'

'Middlin' well.' Old Hobden let himself down on the coals by the fire door. 'I was courtin' my woman on the Marsh that year. Carter to Mus' Plum I was—gettin' ten shillin's week. Mine was a Marsh woman.'

'Won'erful odd-gates place—Romney Marsh,' said Tom Shoesmith. 'I've heard say the world's divided like into Europe, Ashy, Afriky, Ameriky, Australy, an' Romney Marsh.'

'The Marsh folk think so,' said Hobden. 'I

had a hem o' trouble to get my woman to leave it.'

'Where did she come out of? I've forgot, Ralph.'

'Dymchurch under the Wall,' Hobden answered, a potato in his hand.

'Then she'd be a Pett—or a Whitgift, would she?'

'Whitgift.' Hobden broke open the potato and ate it with the curious neatness of men who make most of their meals in the blowy open. 'She growed to be quite reasonable-like after livin' in the Weald awhile, but our first twenty year or two she was odd-fashioned, no bounds. And she was a won'erful hand with bees.' He cut away a little piece of potato and threw it out to the door.

'Ah! I've heard say the Whitgifts could see further through a millstone than most,' said Shoesmith. 'Did she, now?'

'She was honest-innocent of any nigromancin',' said Hobden. 'Only she'd read signs and sinnifications out 'o birds flyin', stars fallin', bees hivin', and such. An' she'd lie awake—listenin' for calls, she said.'

'That don't prove naught,' said Tom. 'All Marsh folk has been smugglers since time everlastin'. 'Twould be in her blood to listen out o' nights.'

'Nature-ally,' old Hobden replied, smiling. 'I

mind when there was smugglin' a sight nearer us than the Marsh be. But that wasn't my woman's trouble. 'Twas a passel o' no-sense talk,' he dropped his voice, 'about Pharisees.'

'Yes. I've heard Marsh men beleft in 'em.' Tom looked straight at the wide-eyed children beside Bess.

'Pharisees,' cried Una. 'Fairies? Oh, I see!'

'People o' the Hills,' said the Bee Boy, throwing half of his potato towards the door.

'There you be!' said Hobden, pointing at him. 'My boy, he has her eyes and her out-gate senses. That's what *she* called 'em!'

'And what did you think of it all?'

'Um—um,' Hobden rumbled. 'A man that uses fields an' shaws after dark as much as I've done, he don't go out of his road excep' for keepers.'

'But settin' that aside?' said Tom, coaxingly. 'I saw ye throw the Good Piece out-at-doors just now. Do ye believe or—*do* ye?'

'There was a great black eye to that tater,' said Hobden, indignantly.

'My liddle eye didn't see un, then. It looked as if you meant it for—for Any One that might need it. But settin' that aside, D'ye believe or—*do* ye?'

'I ain't sayin' nothin', because I've heard naught, an' I've seen naught. But if you was to say there

was more things after dark in the shaws than men, or fur, or feather, or fin, I dunno as I'd go far-about to call you a liar. Now turn again, Tom. What's your say?'

'I'm like you. I say nothin'. But I'll tell you a tale, an' you can fit it *as* how you please.'

'Passel o' no-sense stuff,' growled Hobden, but he filled his pipe.

'The Marsh men they call it Dymchurch Flit,' Tom went on slowly. 'Hap you've heard it?'

'My woman she've told it me scores o' times. Dunno as I didn't end by belieftin' it—sometimes.'

Hobden crossed over as he spoke, and sucked with his pipe at the yellow lanthorn-flame. Tom rested one great elbow on one great knee, where he sat among the coal.

'Have you ever bin in the Marsh?' he said to Dan.

'Only as far as Rye, once.' Dan answered.

'Ah, that's but the edge. Back behind of her there's steeples settin' beside churches, an' wise women settin' beside their doors, an' the sea settin' above the land, an' ducks herdin' wild in the diks' (he meant ditches). 'The Marsh is justabout riddled with diks an' sluices, an' tide-gates an water-lets. You can hear 'em bubblin' an' grummelin' when the tide works in 'em, an' then you hear the sea rangin' left and right-handed all up

along the Wall. You've seen how flat she is—the Marsh? You'd think nothin' easier than to walk eend-on acrost her? Ah, but the diks an' the water-lets, they twists the roads about as ravelly as witch-yarn on the spindles. So ye get all turned round in broad daylight.'

'That's because they've dreened the waters into the diks,' said Hobden. 'When I courted my woman the rushes was green—Eh me! the rushes was green—an' the Bailiff o' the Marshes, he rode up and down as free as the fog.'

'Who was he?' said Dan.

'Why, the Marsh fever an' ague. He've clapped me on the shoulder once or twice till I shook proper. But now the dreenin' off of the waters have done away with the fevers; so they make a joke, like, that the Bailiff o' the Marshes broke his neck in a dik. A won'erful place for bees an' ducks 'tis too.'

'An' old!' Tom went on. 'Flesh an' Blood have been there since Time Everlastin' Beyond. Well, now, speakin' among themselves, the Marshmen say that from Time Everlastin' Beyond the Pharisees favoured the Marsh above the rest of Old England. I lay the Marshmen ought to know. They've been out after dark, father an' son, smugglin' some one thing or t'other, since ever wool grew to sheep's backs. They say there was always a middlin' few Pharisees to be seen on the Marsh.

Impident as rabbits, they was. They'd dance on the nakid roads in the nakid daytime; they'd flash their liddle green lights along the diks, comin' an' goin', like honest smugglers. Yes, an' times they'd lock the church doors against parson an' clerk of Sundays!'

'That 'ud be smugglers layin' in the lace or the brandy till they could run it out o' the Marsh. I've told my woman so,' said Hobden.

'I'll lay she didn't beleft it, then—not if she was a Whitgift. A won'erful choice place for Pharisees, the Marsh, by all accounts, till Queen Bess's father he come in with his Reformatories.'

'Would that be a Act o' Parliament like?' Hobden asked.

'Sure-ly! Can't do nothing in Old England without Act, Warrant, an' Summons. He got his Act allowed him, an', they say, Queen Bess's father he used the parish churches something shameful. Justabout tore the gizzards out of I dunnamany. Some folk in England they held with 'en; but some they saw it different, an' it eended in 'em takin' sides an' burnin' each other no bounds, accordin' which side was top, time bein'. That tarrified the Pharisees: for Goodwill among Flesh an' Blood is meat an' drink to 'em, an' ill-will is poison.'

'Same as bees,' said the Bee Boy. 'Bees won't stay by a house where there's hating.'

'True,' said Tom. 'This Reformations tarrified the Pharisees same as the reaper goin' round a last stand o' wheat tarrifies rabbits. They packed into the Marsh from all parts, and they says, "Fair or foul, we must flit out o' this, for Merry England's done with, an' we're reckoned among the Images."'

'Did they *all* see it that way?' said Hobden.

'All but one that was called Robin—if you've heard of him. What are you laughing at?' Tom turned to Dan. 'The Pharisees' trouble didn't tech Robin, because he'd cleaved middlin' close to people like. No more he never meant to go out of Old England—not he; so he was sent messagin' for help among Flesh an' Blood. But Flesh an' Blood must always think of their own concerns, an' Robin couldn't get *through* at 'em, ye see. They thought it was tide-echoes off the Marsh.'

'What did you—what did the fai—Pharisees want?' Una asked.

'A boat to be sure. Their liddle wings could no more cross Channel than so many tired butterflies. A boat an' a crew they desired to sail 'em over to France, where yet awhile folks hadn't tore down the Images. They couldn't abide cruel Canterbury Bells ringin' to Bulverhithe for more pore men an' women to be burnded, nor the King's proud messenger ridin' through the land givin' orders to tear down the Images. They couldn't

abide it no shape. Nor yet they couldn't get their boat an' crew to flit by without Leave an' Goodwill from Flesh and Blood; an' Flesh an' Blood came an' went about its own business the while the Marsh was swarvin' up, an' swarvin' up with Pharisees from all England over, striving all means to get *through* at Flesh an' Blood to tell 'en their sore need. . . . I don't know as you've ever heard say Pharisees are like chickens?'

'My woman used to say that too,' said Hobden, folding his brown arms.

'They be. You run too many chickens together, an' the ground sickens like, an' you get a squat, an' your chickens die. Same way, you crowd Pharisees all in one place—*they* don't die, but Flesh an' Blood walkin' among 'em is apt to sick up an' pine off. *They* don't mean it, an' Flesh an' Blood don't know it, but that's the truth—as I've heard. The Pharisees through bein' all stenched up an' frighted, an' tryin' to come *through* with their supplications, they nature-ally changed the thin airs and humours in Flesh an' Blood. It lay on the Marsh like thunder. Men saw their churches ablaze with the wildfire in the windows after dark; they saw their cattle scatterin' and no man scarin'; their sheep flockin' and no man drivin'; their horses latherin' an' no man leadin'; they saw the liddle low green lights more than ever in the dik-sides; they heard the liddle feet patterin' more than ever round the

houses; an' night an' day, day an' night, 'twas all as though they were bein' creeped up on, and hinted at by some One or Other that couldn't rightly shape their trouble. Oh, I lay they sweated! Man an' maid, woman an' child, their Nature done 'em no service all the weeks while the Marsh was swarvin' up with Pharisees. But they was Flesh an' Blood, and Marsh men before all. They reckoned the signs sinnified trouble for the Marsh. Or that the sea 'ud rear up against Dymchurch Wall an' they'd be drownded like Old Winchelsea; or that the Plague was comin'. So they looked for the meanin' in the sea or in the clouds —far an' high up. They never thought to look near an' knee-high, where they could see naught.

'Now there was a poor widow at Dymchurch under the Wall, which, lacking man or property, she had the more time for feeling; and she come to feel there was a Trouble outside her doorstep bigger an' heavier than aught she'd ever carried over it. She had two sons—one born blind, and t'other struck dumb through fallin' off the Wall when he was liddle. They was men grown, but not wage-earnin', an' she worked for 'em, keepin' bees and answerin' Questions.'

'What sort of questions?' said Dan.

'Like where lost things might be found, an' what to put about a crooked baby's neck, an' how to join parted sweethearts. She felt the Trouble

on the Marsh same as eels feel thunder. She was a wise woman.'

'My woman was won'erful weather-tender, too,' said Hobden. 'I've seen her brish sparks like off an anvil out of her hair in thunderstorms. But she never laid out to answer Questions.'

'This woman was a Seeker like, an' Seekers they sometimes find. One night, while she lay abed, hot an' aching, there come a Dream an' tapped at her window, and "Widow Whitgift," it said, "Widow Whitgift!"

'First, by the wings an' the whistling, she thought it was peewits, but last she arose an' dressed herself, an' opened her door to the Marsh, an' she felt the Trouble an' the Groaning all about her, strong as fever an' ague, an' she calls: "What is it? Oh, what is it?"

'Then 'twas all like the frogs in the diks peeping: then 'twas all like the reeds in the diks clip-clapping; an' then the great Tide-wave rummelled along the Wall, an' she couldn't hear proper.

'Three times she called, an' three times the Tide-wave did her down. But she catched the quiet between, an' she cries out, "What is the Trouble on the Marsh that's been lying down with my heart an' arising with my body this month gone?" She felt a liddle hand lay hold on her gown-hem, and she stooped to the pull o' that liddle hand.'

Tom Shoesmith spread his huge fist before the fire and smiled at it.

'"Will the sea drown the Marsh?" she says. She was a Marsh-woman first an' foremost.

'"No," says the liddle voice. "Sleep sound for all o' that."

'"Is the Plague comin' to the Marsh?" she says. Them was all the ills she knowed.

'"No. Sleep sound for all o' that," says Robin.

'She turned about, half mindful to go in, but the liddle voices grieved that shrill an' sorrowful she turns back, an' she cries: "If it is not a Trouble of Flesh an' Blood, what can I do?"

'The Pharisees cried out upon her from all round to fetch them a boat to sail to France, an' come back no more.

'"There's a boat on the Wall," she says, "but I can't push it down to the sea, nor sail it when 'tis there."

'"Lend us your sons," says all the Pharisees. "Give 'em Leave an' Good-will to sail it for us, Mother—O Mother!"

'"One's dumb, an' t'other's blind," she says. "But all the dearer me for that; and you'll lose them in the big sea." The voices justabout pierced through her. An' there was children's voices too. She stood out all she could, but she couldn't rightly stand against *that*. So she says: "If you can draw

my sons for your job, I'll not hinder 'em. You can't ask no more of a Mother."

'She saw them liddle green lights dance an' cross till she was dizzy; she heard them liddle feet patterin' by the thousand; she heard cruel Canterbury Bells ringing to Bulverhithe, an' she heard the great Tide-wave ranging along the Wall. That was while the Pharisees was workin' a Dream to wake her two sons asleep: an' while she bit on her fingers she saw them two she'd bore come out an' pass her with never a word. She followed 'em, cryin' pitiful, to the old boat on the Wall, an' that they took an' runned down to the Sea.

'When they'd stepped mast an' sail the blind son speaks up: "Mother, we're waitin' your Leave an' Good-will to take Them over."'

Tom Shoesmith threw back his head and half shut his eyes.

'Eh, me!' he said. 'She was a fine, valiant woman, the Widow Whitgift. She stood twistin' the ends of her long hair over her fingers, an' she shook like a poplar, makin' up her mind. The Pharisees all about they hush their children from cryin' an' they waited dumb-still. She was all their dependence. 'Thout her Leave an' Good-will they could not pass; for she was the Mother. So she shook like a asp-tree makin' up her mind. 'Last she drives the word past her teeth, an' "Go!" she says. "Go with my Leave an' Good-will."

'Then I saw—then, they say, she had to brace back same as if she was wadin' in tidewater; for the Pharisees justabout flowed past her—down the beach to the boat, *I* dunnamany of 'em—with their wives an' children an' valooables, all escapin' out of cruel Old England. Silver you could hear clinkin', an' liddle bundles hove down dunt on the bottom-boards, an' passels o' liddle swords an' shield's raklin', an' liddle fingers an' toes scratchin' on the boatside to board her when the two sons pushed her off. That boat she sunk lower an' lower, but all the Widow could see in it was her boys movin' hampered-like to get at the tackle. Up sail they did, an' away they went, deep as a Rye barge, away into the off-shore mistes, an' the Widow Whitgift she sat down and eased her grief till mornin' light.'

'I never heard she was *all* alone," said Hobden.

'I remember now. The one called Robin he stayed with her, they tell. She was all too grievious to listen to his promises.'

'Ah! She should ha' made her bargain beforehand. I allus told my woman so!' Hobden cried.

'No. She loaned her sons for a pure love-loan, bein' as she sensed the Trouble on the Marshes,' an' was simply good-willing to ease it.' Tom laughed softly. 'She done that. Yes, she done that! From Hithe to Bulverhithe, fretty man an' petty maid, ailin' woman an' wailin' child, they

took the advantage of the change in the thin airs just about *as* soon as the Pharisees flitted. Folks come out fresh an' shining all over the Marsh like snails after wet. An' that while the Widow Whitgift sat grievin' on the Wall. She might have beleft us—she might have trusted her sons would be sent back! She fussed, no bounds, when their boat come in after three days.'

'And, of course, the sons were both quite cured?' said Una.

'No-o. That would have been out o' Nature. She got 'em back *as* she sent 'em. The blind man he hadn't seen naught of anything, an' the dumb man nature-ally, he couldn't say aught of what he'd seen. I reckon that was why the Pharisees pitched on 'em for the ferrying job.'

'But what did you—what did Robin, promise the Widow?' said Dan.

'What *did* he promise, now?' Tom pretended to think. 'Wasn't your woman a Whitgift, Ralph? Didn't she say?'

'She told me a passel o' no-sense stuff when he was born.' Hobden pointed at his son. 'There was always to be one of 'em that could see further into a millstone than most.'

'Me! That's me!' said the Bee Boy so suddenly that they all laughed.

'I've got it now!' cried Tom, slapping his knee. 'So long as Whitgift blood lasted, Robin promised

there would allers be one o' her stock that—that no Trouble 'ud lie on, no Maid 'ud sigh on, no Night could frighten, no Fright could harm, no Harm could make sin, an' no Woman could make a fool.'

'Well, ain't that just me?' said the Bee Boy, where he sat in the silver square of the great September moon that was staring into the oast-house door.

'They was the exact words she told me when we first found he wasn't like others. But it beats me how you known 'em,' said Hobden.

'Aha! There's more under my hat besides hair!' Tom laughed and stretched himself. 'When I've seen these two young folk home, we'll make a night of old days, Ralph, with passin' old tales—eh? An' where might you live?' he said, gravely, to Dan. 'An' do you think your Pa 'ud give me a drink for taking you there, Missy?'

They giggled so at this that they had to run out. Tom picked them both up, set one on each broad shoulder, and tramped across the ferny pasture where the cows puffed milky puffs at them in the moonlight.

'Oh, Puck! Puck! I guessed you right from when you talked about the salt. How could you ever do it?' Una cried, swinging along delighted.

'Do what?' he said, and climbed the stile by the pollard oak.

'Pretend to be Tom Shoesmith,' said Dan, and they ducked to avoid the two little ashes that grow by the bridge over the brook. Tom was almost running.

'Yes. That's my name, Mus' Dan,' he said, hurrying over the silent shining lawn, where a rabbit sat by the big white-thorn near the croquet ground. 'Here you be.' He strode into the old kitchen yard, and slid them down as Ellen came to ask questions.

'I'm helping in Mus' Spray's oast-house,' he said to her. 'No, I'm no foreigner. I knowed this country 'fore your Mother was born; an'—yes it's dry work oasting, Miss. Thank you.'

Ellen went to get a jug, and the children went in —magicked once more by Oak, Ash, and Thorn!

A THREE-PART SONG

I'm just in love with all these three,
The Weald and the Marsh and the Down countrie;
Nor I don't know which I love the most,
The Weald or the Marsh or the white chalk coast!

I've buried my heart in a ferny hill,
Twix' a liddle low Shaw an' a great high Gill.
Oh hop-vine yaller and woodsmoke blue,
I reckon you'll keep her middling true!

I've loosed my mind for to out and run,
On a Marsh that was old when Kings begun;
Oh Romney Level and Brenzett reeds,
I reckon you know what my mind needs!

I've given my soul to the Southdown grass,
And sheep-bells tinkled where you pass
Oh Firle an' Ditchling an' sails at sea,
I reckon you'll keep my soul or me!

SONG OF THE FIFTH RIVER

When first by Eden Tree,
The Four Great Rivers ran,
To each was appointed a Man
Her Prince and Ruler to be.

But after this was ordained,
(The ancient legends tell)
There came dark Israel,
For whom no River remained.

Then He That is Wholly Just,
Said to him: 'Fling on the ground
A handful of yellow dust,
And a Fifth Great River shall run,
Mightier than these Four,
In secret the Earth around;
And Her secret evermore,
Shall be shown to thee and thy Race.'

So it was said and done.
And, deep in the veins of Earth,
And, fed by a thousand springs
That comfort the market-place,
Or sap the power of Kings,
The Fifth Great River had birth,
Even as it was foretold—
The Secret River of Gold!

And Israel laid down
His sceptre and his crown,
To brood on that River bank,
Where the waters flashed and sank,
And burrowed in earth and fell,
And bided a season below;
For reason that none might know,
Save only Israel.

He is Lord of the Last—
The Fifth, most wonderful, Flood.
He hears her thunder past
And Her Song is in his blood.
He can foresay: 'She will fall,'
For he knows which fountain dries,
Behind which desert belt
A thousand leagues to the South.
He can foresay: 'She will rise.'
He knows what far snows melt;

SONG OF THE FIFTH RIVER

Along what mountain wall
A thousand leagues to the North
He snuffs the coming drouth
As he snuffs the coming rain,
He knows what each will bring forth
And turns it to his gain.

A Prince without a Sword,
A Ruler without a Throne;
Israel follows his quest:—
In every land a guest.
Of many lands the lord.
In no land King is he.
But the Fifth Great River keeps
The secret of her deeps
For Israel alone,
As it was ordered to be.

THE TREASURE AND THE LAW

THE TREASURE AND THE LAW

NOW it was the third week in November, and the woods rang with the noise of pheasant-shooting. No one hunted that steep, cramped country except the village beagles, who, as often as not, escaped from their kennels and made a day of their own. Dan and Una found a couple of them towling round the kitchen-garden after the laundry cat. The little brutes were only too pleased to go rabbiting, so the children ran them all along the brook pastures and into Little Lindens farm-yard, where the old sow vanquished them—and up to the quarry-hole, where they started a fox. He headed for Far Wood, and there they frightened out all the pheasants who were sheltering from a big beat across the valley. Then the cruel guns began again, and they grabbed the beagles lest they should stray and get hurt.

'I wouldn't be a pheasant—in November—for a lot,' Dan panted, as he caught *Folly* by the neck. 'Why did you laugh that horrid way?'

'I didn't,' said Una, sitting on *Flora*, the fat lady-dog. 'Oh, look! The silly birds are going back to their own woods instead of ours, where they would be safe.'

'Safe till it pleased you to kill them.' An old man, so tall he was almost a giant, stepped from behind the clump of hollies by 'Volaterrae.' The children jumped, and the dogs dropped like setters. He wore a sweeping gown of dark thick stuff, lined and edged with yellowish fur, and he bowed a bent-down bow that made them feel both proud and ashamed. Then he looked at them steadily, and they stared back without doubt or fear.

'You are not afraid?' he said, running his hands through his splendid grey beard. 'Not afraid that those men yonder'—he jerked his head towards the incessant pop-pop of the guns from the lower woods—'will do you hurt?'

'We-ell'—Dan liked to be accurate, especially when he was shy—'old Hobd—a friend of mine told me that one of the beaters got peppered last week—hit in the leg, I mean. You see, Mr. Meyer *will* fight at rabbits. But he gave Waxy Garnett a quid—sovereign, I mean—and Waxy told Hobden he'd have stood both barrels for half the money.'

'He doesn't understand,' Una cried, watching the pale, troubled face. 'Oh, I wish——'

She had scarcely said it when Puck rustled out of the hollies and spoke to the man quickly in foreign words. Puck wore a long cloak too—the afternoon was just frosting down—and it changed his appearance altogether.

'Nay, nay!' he said at last. 'You did not understand the boy. A freeman was a little hurt, by pure mischance at the hunting.'

'I know that mischance! What did his Lord do? Laugh and ride over him?' the old man sneered.

'It was one of your own people did the hurt, Kadmiel.' Puck's eyes twinkled maliciously. 'So he gave the freeman a piece of gold, and no more was said.'

'A Jew drew blood from a Christian and no more was said?' Kadmiel cried. 'Never! When did they torture him?'

'No man may be bound, or fined, or slain till he has been judged by his peers,' Puck insisted. 'There is but one Law in Old England for Jew or Christian—the Law that was signed at Runnymede.'

'Why, that's Magna Charta!' Dan whispered. It was one of the few history dates that he could remember. Kadmiel turned on him with a sweep and a whirr of his spicy-scented gown.

'Dost *thou* know of that, babe?' he cried, and lifted his hands in wonder.

'Yes,' said Dan, firmly.

> 'Magna Charta was signed by John,
> That Henry the Third put his heel upon.

And old Hobden says that if it hadn't been for her (he calls everything "her," you know), the keepers would have him clapped in Lewes Gaol all the year round.'

Again Puck translated to Kadmiel in the strange, solemn-sounding language, and at last Kadmiel laughed.

'Out of the mouths of babes do we learn,' said he. 'But tell me now, and I will not call you a babe but a Rabbi, *why* did the King sign the roll of the New Law at Runnymede? For he was a King.'

Dan looked sideways at his sister. It was her turn.

'Because he jolly well had to,' said Una, softly. 'The Barons made him.'

'Nay,' Kadmiel answered, shaking his head. 'You Christians always forget that gold does more than the sword. Our good King signed because he could not borrow more money from us bad Jews.' He curved his shoulders as he spoke. 'A King without gold is a snake with a broken back, and, —his nose sneered up and his eyebrows frowned down—' it is a good deed to break a snake's back.

That was my work,' he cried triumphantly, to Puck. 'Spirit of Earth, bear witness that that was *my* work!' He shot up to his full towering height, and his words rang like a trumpet. He had a voice that changed its tone almost as an opal changes colour—sometimes deep and thundery, sometimes thin and waily, but always it made you listen.

'Many people can bear witness to that,' Puck answered. 'Tell these babes how it was done. Remember, Master, they do not know Doubt or Fear.'

'So I saw in their faces when we met,' said Kadmiel. 'Yet surely, surely they are taught to spit upon Jews?'

'Are they?' said Dan, much interested. 'Where at?'

Puck fell back a pace, laughing. 'Kadmiel is thinking of King John's reign,' he explained. 'His people were badly treated then.'

'Oh, we know *that*,' they answered, and (it was very rude of them, but they could not help it) they stared straight at Kadmiel's mouth to see if his teeth were all there. It stuck in their lesson-memory that King John used to pull out Jews' teeth to make them lend him money.

Kadmiel understood the look and smiled bitterly.

'No. Your King never drew my teeth: I

think, perhaps, I drew his. Listen! I was not born among Christians, but among Moors—in Spain—in a little white town under the mountains. Yes, the Moors are cruel, but at least their learned men dare to think. It was prophesied of me at my birth that I should be a Lawgiver to a People of a strange speech and a hard language. We Jews are always looking for the Prince and the Lawgiver to come. Why not? My people in the town (we were very few) set me apart as a child of the prophecy—the Chosen of the Chosen. We Jews dream so many dreams. You would never guess it to see us slink about the rubbish-heaps in our quarter; but at the day's end—doors shut, candles lit—aha! *then* we become the Chosen again.'

He paced back and forth through the wood as he talked. The rattle of the shot-guns never ceased, and the dogs whimpered a little and lay flat on the leaves.

'I was a Prince. Yes! Think of a little Prince who had never known rough words in his own house handed over to shouting, bearded Rabbis, who pulled his ears and filliped his nose, all that he might learn—learn—learn to be King when his time came. Hé! Such a little Prince it was! One eye he kept on the stone-throwing Moorish boys, and the other it roved about the streets looking for his Kingdom. Yes, and he learned to cry

softly when he was hunted up and down those streets. He learned to do all things without noise. He played beneath his father's table when the Great Candle was lit, and he listened as children listen to the talk of his father's friends above the table. They came across the mountains, from out of all the world; for my Prince's father was their councillor. They came from behind the armies of Sala-ud-Din: from Rome: from Venice: from England. They stole down our alley, they tapped secretly at our door, they took off their rags, they arrayed themselves, and they talked to my father at the wine. All over the world the heathen fought each other. They brought news of these wars, and while he played beneath the table, my Prince heard these meanly-dressed ones decide between themselves how, and when, and for how long King should draw sword against King, and People rise up against People. Why not? There can be no war without gold, and we Jews know how the earth's gold moves with the seasons, and the crops, and the winds; circling and looping and rising and sinking away like a river—a wonderful underground river. How should the foolish Kings know *that* while they fight and steal and kill?'

The children's faces showed that they knew nothing at all as, with open eyes, they trotted and turned beside the long-striding old man. He twitched his gown over his shoulders, and a square

plate of gold, studded with jewels, gleamed for an instant through the fur, like a star through flying snow.

'No matter,' he said. 'But, credit me, my Prince saw peace or war decided not once, but many times, by the fall of a coin spun between a Jew from Bury and a Jewess from Alexandria, in his father's house, when the Great Candle was lit. Such power had we Jews among the Gentiles. Ah, my little Prince! Do you wonder that he learned quickly? Why not?' He muttered to himself and went on:—

'My trade was that of a physician. When I had learned it in Spain I went to the East to find my Kingdom. Why not? A Jew is as free as a sparrow—or a dog. He goes where he is hunted. In the East I found libraries where men dared to think—schools of medicine where they dared to learn. I was diligent in my business. Therefore I stood before Kings. I have been a brother to Princes and a companion to beggars, and I have walked between the living and the dead. There was no profit in it. I did not find my Kingdom. So, in the tenth year of my travels, when I had reached the Uttermost Eastern Sea, I returned to my father's house. God had wonderfully preserved my people. None had been slain, none even wounded, and only a few scourged. I became once more a son in my father's house. Again the

Great Candle was lit; again the meanly-apparelled ones tapped on our door after dusk; and again I heard them weigh out peace and war, as they weighed out the gold on the table. But I was not rich—not very rich. Therefore, when those that had power and knowledge and wealth talked together, I sat in the shadow. Why not?

'Yet all my wanderings had shown me one sure thing, which is, that a King without money is like a spear without a head. He cannot do much harm. I said, therefore, to Elias of Bury, a great one among our people: "Why do our people lend any more to the Kings that oppress us?" "Because," said Elias, "if we refuse they stir up their people against us, and the People are tenfold more cruel than Kings. If thou doubtest, come with me to Bury in England and live as I live."

'I saw my mother's face across the candle-flame, and I said, "I will come with thee to Bury. Maybe my Kingdom shall be there."

'So I sailed with Elias to the darkness and the cruelty of Bury in England, where there are no learned men. How can a man be wise if he hate? At Bury I kept his accounts for Elias, and I saw men kill Jews there by the tower. No—none laid hands on Elias. He lent money to the King, and the King's favour was about him. A King will not take the life so long as there is any gold. This King—yes, John—oppressed his people bitterly

because they would not give him money. Yet his land was a good land. If he had only given it rest he might have cropped it as a Christian crops his beard. But even *that* little he did not know; for God had deprived him of all understanding, and had multiplied pestilence, and famine, and despair upon the people. Therefore, his people turned against us Jews, who are all people's dogs. Why, not? Lastly the Barons and the people rose together against the King because of his cruelties. Nay—nay—the Barons did not love the people, but they saw that if the King eat up and destroyed the common people, he would presently destroy the Barons. They joined them, as cats and pigs will join to slay a snake. I kept the accounts, and I watched all these things, for I remembered the Prophecy.

'A great gathering of Barons (to most of whom we had lent money) came to Bury, and there, after much talk and a thousand runnings-about, they made a roll of the New Laws that they would force on the King. If he swore to keep those Laws, they would allow him a little money. That was the King's God—Money—to waste. They showed us the roll of the New Laws. Why not? We had lent them money. We knew all their counsels—we Jews shivering behind our doors in Bury.' He threw out his hands suddenly. 'We did not seek to be paid *all* in money. We sought

Power—Power—Power! That is *our* God in our captivity. Power to use!

'I said to Elias: "These New Laws are good. Lend no money to the King: so long as he has money he will lie and slay the people."

'"Nay," said Elias. "I know this people. They are madly cruel. Better one King than a thousand butchers. I have lent a little money to the Barons, or they would torture us, but my most I will lend to the King. He hath promised me a place near him at Court, where my wife and I shall be safe."

'"But if the King be made to keep these New Laws," I said, "the land will have peace, and our trade will grow. If we lend he will fight again."

'"Who made thee a Lawgiver in England?" said Elias. "I know this people. Let the dogs tear one another! I will lend the King ten thousand pieces of gold, and he can fight the Barons at his pleasure."

'"There are not two thousand pieces of gold in all England this summer," I said, for I kept the accounts, and I knew how the earth's gold moved—that wonderful underground river! Elias barred home the windows, and, his hands about his mouth, he told me how, when he was trading with small wares in a French ship, he had come to the Castle at Pevensey.'

'Oh!" said Dan. 'Pevensey again!' and looked at Una, who nodded and skipped.

'There, after they had scattered his pack up and down the Great Hall, some young knights carried him to an upper room, and dropped him into a well in a wall, that rose and fell with the tide. They called him Joseph, and threw torches at his wet head. Why not?'

'Why, of course,' cried Dan. 'Didn't you know it was——' Puck held up his hand to stop him, and Kadmiel, who never noticed, went on.

'When the tide dropped he thought he stood on old armour, but feeling with his toes, he raked up bar on bar of soft gold. Some wicked treasure of the old days put away, and the secret cut off by the sword. I have heard the like before.'

'So have we,' Una whispered. 'But it wasn't wicked a bit.'

'Elias took a morsel of the stuff with him, and thrice yearly he would return to Pevensey as a chapman, selling at no price or profit, till they suffered him to sleep in the empty room, where he would plumb and grope, and steal away a few bars. The great store of it still remained, and by long brooding he had come to look on it as his own. Yet when we thought how we should lift and convey it, we saw no way. This was before the Word of the Lord had come to me. A walled fortress possessed by Normans; in the midst a forty-foot

tide-well out of which to remove secretly many horse-loads of gold! Hopeless! So Elias wept. Adah, his wife, wept too. She had hoped to stand beside the Queen's Christian tiring-maids at Court, when the King should give them that place at Court which he had promised. Why not? She was born in England—an odious woman.

'The present evil to us was that Elias, out of his strong folly, had, as it were, promised the King that he would arm him with more gold. Wherefore the King in his camp stopped his ears against the Barons and the people. Wherefore men died daily. Adah so desired her place at Court, she besought Elias to tell the King where the treasure lay, that the King might take it by force, and—they would trust in his gratitude. Why not? This Elias refused to do, for he looked on the gold as his own. They quarrelled and they wept at the evening meal, and late in the night came one Langton—a priest, almost learned—to borrow more money for the Barons. Elias and Adah went to their chamber.'

Kadmiel laughed scornfully in his beard. The shots across the valley stopped as the shooting-party changed their ground for the last beat.

'So it was I, not Elias,' he went on, quietly. 'that made terms with Langton touching the fortieth of the New Laws.'

'What terms?' said Puck, quickly. 'The

Fortieth of the Great Charter say: "To none will we sell, refuse, or deny right or justice."'

'True, but the Barons had written first: *To no free man.* It cost me two hundred broad pieces of gold to change those narrow words. Langton, the priest, understood. "Jew though thou art," said he, "the change is just, and if ever Christian and Jew come to be equal in England thy people may thank thee." Then he went out stealthily, as men do who deal with Israel by night. I think he spent my gift upon his altar. Why not? I have spoken with Langton. He was such a man as I might have been if—if we Jews had been a people. But yet, in many things, a child.

'I heard Elias and Adah abovestairs quarrel, and knowing the woman was the stronger, I saw that Elias would tell the King of the gold and that the King would continue in his stubbornness. Therefore I saw that the gold must be put away from the reach of any man. Of a sudden, the Word of the Lord came to me saying, "The Morning is come, thou that dwellest in the land."'

Kadmiel halted, all black against the pale green sky beyond the wood—a huge robed figure, like the Moses in the picture-Bible.

'I rose. I went out, and as I shut the door on that House of Foolishness, the woman looked from the window and whispered, "I have prevailed on my husband to tell the King!"

I answered, "There is no need. The Lord is with me."

'In that hour the Lord gave me full understanding of all that I must do; and His Hand covered me in my ways. First I went to London, to a physician of our people, who sold me certain drugs that I needed. You shall see why. Thence I went swiftly to Pevensey. Men fought all around me, for there were neither rulers nor judges in the abominable land. Yet when I walked by them they cried out that I was one Ahasuerus, a Jew, condemned, as they believe, to live for ever, and they fled from me everyways. Thus the Lord saved me for my work, and at Pevensey I bought me a little boat and moored it on the mud beneath the Marsh-gate of the Castle. That also God showed me.'

He was as calm as though he were speaking of some stranger, and his voice filled the little bare wood with rolling music.

'I cast'—his hand went to his breast, and again the strange jewel gleamed—'I cast the drugs which I had prepared into the common well of the Castle. Nay, I did no harm. The more we physicians know, the less do we do. Only the fool says: "I dare." I caused a blotched and itching rash to break out upon their skins, but I knew it would fade in fifteen days. I did not stretch out my hand against their life. They in the

Castle thought it was the Plague, and they ran forth, taking with them their very dogs.

'A Christian physician, seeing that I was a Jew and a stranger, vowed that I had brought the sickness from London. This is the one time I have ever heard a Christian leech speak truth of any disease. Thereupon the people beat me, but a merciful woman said: "Do not kill him now. Push him into our Castle with his plague, and if, as he says, it will abate on the fifteenth day, we can kill him then." Why not? They drove me across the draw-bridge of the Castle, and fled back to their booths. Thus I came to be alone with the treasure.'

'But did you know this was all going to happen just right?' said Una.

'My Prophecy was that I should be a Law-giver to a People of a strange land and a hard speech. I knew I should not die. I washed my cuts. I found the tide-well in the wall, and from Sabbath to Sabbath I dove and dug there in that empty, Christian-smelling fortress. He! I spoiled the Egyptians! He'! If they had only known! I drew up many good loads of gold, which I loaded by night into my boat. There had been gold-dust too, but that had been washed away by the tides.'

'Didn't you ever wonder who had put it there?' said Dan, stealing a glance at Puck's calm, dark

face under the hood of his gown. Puck shook his head and pursed his lips.

'Often; for the gold was new to me,' Kadmiel replied. 'I know the Golds. I can judge them in the dark; but this was heavier and redder than any we deal in. Perhaps it was the very gold of Parvaim. Eh, why not? It went to my heart to heave it on to the mud, but I saw well that if the evil thing remained, or if even the hope of finding it remained, the King would not sign the New Laws, and the land would perish.'

'Oh, Marvel!' said Puck, beneath his breath, rustling in the dead leaves.

'When the boat was loaded I washed my hands seven times, and pared beneath my nails, for I would not keep one grain. I went out by the little gate where the Castle's refuse is thrown. I dared not hoist sail lest men should see me; but the Lord commanded the tide to bear me carefully, and I was far from land before the morning.'

'Weren't you afraid?" said Una.

'Why? There were no Christians in the boat. At sunrise I made my prayer, and cast the gold—all—all that gold into the deep sea! A King's ransom—no, the ransom of a People! When I had loosed hold of the last bars, the Lord commanded the tide to return me to a haven at the mouth of a river, and thence I walked across a wilderness to Lewes, where I have brethren. They

opened the door to me, and they say—I had not eaten for two days—they say that I fell across the threshold, crying, "I have sunk an army with horsemen in the sea!"'

'But you hadn't,' said Una. 'Oh, yes! I see! You meant that King John might have spent it on that?'

'Even so,' said Kadmiel.

The firing broke out again close behind them. The pheasants poured over the top of a belt of tall firs. They could see young Mr. Meyer, in his new yellow gaiters, very busy and excited at the end of the line, and they could hear the thud of the falling birds.

'But what did Elias of Bury do?' Puck demanded. 'He had promised money to the King.'

Kadmiel smiled grimly. 'I sent him word from London that the Lord was on my side. When he heard that the Plague had broken out in Pevensey, and that a Jew had been thrust into the Castle to cure it, he understood my word was true. He and Adah hurried to Lewes and asked me for an accounting. He still looked on the gold as his own. I told them where I had laid it, and I gave them full leave to pick it up. . . . Eh, well! The curses of a fool and the dust of a journey are two things no wise man can escape. . . . But I pitied Elias! The King was wroth at him because he could not lend; the Barons were wroth

at him because they heard that he would have lent to the King; and Adah was wroth at him because she was an odious woman. They took ship from Lewes to Spain. That was wise!'

'And you? Did you see the signing of the Law at Runnymede?' said Puck, as Kadmiel laughed noiselessly.

'Nay. Who am I to meddle with things too high for me? I returned to Bury, and lent money on the autumn crops. Why not?'

There was a crackle overhead. A cock-pheasant that had sheered aside after being hit spattered down almost on top of them, driving up the dry leaves like a shell. *Flora* and *Folly* threw themselves at it; the children rushed forward, and when they had beaten them off and smoothed down the plumage Kadmiel had disappeared.

'Well,' said Puck, calmly, 'what did you think of it? Weland gave the Sword. The Sword gave the Treasure, and the Treasure gave the Law. It's as natural as an oak growing.'

'I don't understand. Didn't he know it was Sir Richard's old treasure?' said Dan. 'And why did Sir Richard and Brother Hugh leave it lying about? And—and——'

'Never mind,' said Una, politely. 'He'll let us come and go, and look, and know another time. Won't you, Puck?'

'Another time maybe,' Puck answered. 'Brr!

It's cold—and late. I'll race you towards home!'

They hurried down into the sheltered valley. The sun had almost sunk behind Cherry Clack, the trodden ground by the cattle-gates was freezing at the edges, and the new-waked north wind blew the night on them from over the hills. They picked up their feet and flew across the browned pastures, and when they halted, panting in the steam of their own breath, the dead leaves whirled up behind them. There was Oak and Ash and Thorn enough in that year-end shower to magic away a thousand memories.

So they trotted to the brook at the bottom of the lawn, wondering why *Flora* and *Folly* had missed the quarry-hole fox.

Old Hobden was just finishing some hedge-work. They saw his white smock glimmer in the twilight where he faggoted the rubbish.

'Winter, he's come, I rackon, Mus' Dan,' he called. 'Hard times now till Heffle Cuckoo Fair. Yes, we'll all be glad to see the Old Woman let the Cuckoo out o' the basket for to start lawful Spring in England.' They heard a crash, and a stamp and a splash of water as though a heavy old cow were crossing almost under their noses.

Hobden ran forward angrily to the ford.

'Gleason's bull again, playin' Robin all over the Farm! Oh, look, Mus' Dan—his great footmark as big as a trencher. No bounds to his impidence!

He might count himself to be a man—or Somebody.'

A voice the other side of the brook boomed:

> 'I marvel who his cloak would turn
> When Puck had led him round,
> Or where those walking fires would burne——'

Then the children went in singing "Farewell Rewards and Fairies" at the tops of their voices. They had forgotten that they had not even said good-night to Puck.

THE CHILDREN'S SONG

Land of our Birth, we pledge to thee
Our love and toil in the years to be,
When we are grown and take our place
As men and women with our race.

Father in Heaven who lovest all,
Oh help Thy children when they call;
That they may build from age to age,
An undefiled heritage!

Teach us to bear the yoke in youth,
With steadfastness and careful truth;
That, in our time, Thy Grace may give
The truth whereby the Nations live.

Teach us to rule ourselves alway,
Controlled and cleanly night and day;
That we may bring, if need arise,
No maimed or worthless sacrifice.

THE CHILDREN'S SONG

Teach us to look in all our ends,
On Thee for judge, and not our friends;
That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed
By fear or favour of the crowd.

Teach us the Strength that cannot seek,
By deed or thought, to hurt the weak;
That, under Thee, we may possess
Man's strength to comfort man's distress.

Teach us Delight in simple things,
And Mirth that has no bitter springs;
Forgiveness free of evil done,
And Love to all men 'neath the sun!

Land of our Birth, our Faith, our Pride,
For whose dear sake our fathers died;
O Motherland, we pledge to thee,
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be!

"CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS"

TO

JAMES CONLAND, M. D.

BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT.

I ploughed the land with horses,
But my heart was ill at ease,
For the old sea-faring men
Came to me now and then,
With their sagas of the seas.

Longfellow.

"CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS"

A STORY OF THE GRAND BANKS

CHAPTER I

THE weather door of the smoking-room had been left open to the North Atlantic fog, as the big liner rolled and lifted, whistling to warn the fishing-fleet.

"That Cheyne boy's the biggest nuisance aboard," said a man in a frieze overcoat, shutting the door with a bang. "He isn't wanted here. He's too fresh."

A white-haired German reached for a sandwich, and grunted between bites: "I know der breed. Ameriga is full of dot kind. I dell you you should imbort ropes' ends free under your dariff."

"Pshaw! There isn't any real harm to him. He's more to be pitied than anything," a man from New York drawled, as he lay at full length along the cushions under the wet skylight.

"They've dragged him around from hotel to hotel ever since he was a kid. I was talking to his mother this morning. She's a lovely lady, but she don't pretend to manage him. He's going to Europe to finish his education."

"Education isn't begun yet." This was a Philadelphian, curled up in a corner. "That boy gets two hundred a month pocket-money, he told me. He isn't sixteen either."

"Railroads, his father, aind't it?" said the German.

"Yep. That and mines and lumber and shipping. Built one place at San Diego, the old man has; another at Los Angeles; owns half a dozen railroads, half the lumber on the Pacific slope, and lets his wife spend the money," the Philadelphian went on lazily. "The West don't suit her, she says. She just tracks around with the boy and her nerves, trying to find out what'll amuse *him*, I guess. Florida, Adirondacks, Lakewood, Hot Springs, New York, and round again. He isn't much more than a second-hand hotel clerk now. When he's finished in Europe he'll be a holy terror."

"What's the matter with the old man attending to him personally?" said a voice from the frieze ulster.

"Old man's piling up the rocks. 'Don't want to be disturbed, I guess. He'll find out his error

a few years from now. 'Pity, because there's a heap of good in the boy if you could get at it."

"Mit a rope's end; mit a rope's end!" growled the German.

Once more the door banged, and a slight, slim-built boy perhaps fifteen years old, a half-smoked cigarette hanging from one corner of his mouth, leaned in over the high footway. His pasty yellow complexion did not show well on a person of his years, and his look was a mixture of irresolution, bravado, and very cheap smartness. He was dressed in a cherry-coloured blazer, knickerbockers, red stockings, and bicycle shoes, with a red flannel cap at the back of the head. After whistling between his teeth, as he eyed the company, he said in a loud, high voice: "Say, it's thick outside. You can hear the fish-boats squawking all around us. Say, wouldn't it be great if we ran down one?"

"Shut the door, Harvey," said the New Yorker. "Shut the door and stay outside. You're not wanted here."

"Who'll stop me?" he answered deliberately. "Did *you* pay for my passage, Mister Martin? 'Guess I've as good right here as the next man."

He picked up some dice from a checker-board and began throwing, right hand against left.

"Say, gen'elmen, this is deader'n mud. Can't we make a game of poker between us?"

There was no answer, and he puffed his cigarette, swung his legs, and drummed on the table with rather dirty fingers. Then he pulled out a roll of bills as if to count them.

"How's your mamma this afternoon?" a man said. "I didn't see her at lunch."

"In her state-room, I guess. She's 'most always sick on the ocean. I'm going to give the stewardess fifteen dollars for looking after her. I don't go down more'n I can avoid. It makes me feel mysterious to pass that butler's-pantry place. Say, this is the first time I've been on the ocean."

"Oh, don't apologise, Harvey."

"Who's apologising? This is the first time I've crossed the ocean, gen'elmen, and, except the first day, I haven't been sick one little bit. *No*, sir!" He brought down his fist with a triumphant bang, wetted his finger, and went on counting the bills.

"Oh, you're a high-grade machine, with the writing in plain sight," the Philadelphian yawned. "You'll blossom into a credit to your country if you don't take care."

"I know it. I'm an American — first, last, and all the time. I'll show 'em that when I strike Europe. Pff! My cig's out. I can't smoke the truck the steward sells. Any gen'elman got a real Turkish cig on him?"

The chief engineer entered for a moment, red, smiling, and wet. "Say, Mac," cried Harvey, cheerfully, "how are we hitting it?"

"Vara much in the ordinary way," was the grave reply. "The young are as polite as ever to their elders, an' their elders are e'en tryin' to appreciate it."

A low chuckle came from a corner. The German opened his cigar-case and handed a skinny black cigar to Harvey.

"Dot is der broper apparatus to smoke, my young friendt," he said. "You vill dry it? Yes? Den you vill be efer so happy."

Harvey lit the unlovely thing with a flourish: he felt that he was getting on in grown-up society.

"It would take more'n this to keel me over," he said, ignorant that he was lighting that terrible article, a Wheeling "stogie."

"Dot we shall bresently see," said the German. "Where are we now, Mr. Mactonal'?"

"Just there or thereabouts, Mr. Schaefer," said the engineer. "We'll be on the Grand Bank to-night; but in a general way o' speakin', we're all among the fishing-fleet now. We've shaved three dories an' near skelped the boom off a Frenchman since noon, an' that's close sailin', ye may say."

"You like my cigar, eh?" the German asked, for Harvey's eyes were full of tears.

"Fine, full flavour," he answered through shut teeth. "Guess we've slowed down a little, haven't we? I'll skip out and see what the log says."

"I might if I vhas you," said the German.

Harvey staggered over the wet decks to the nearest rail. He was very unhappy; but he saw the deck-steward lashing chairs together, and, since he had boasted before the man that he was never seasick, his pride made him go aft to the second-saloon deck at the stern, which was finished in a turtle-back. The deck was deserted, and he crawled to the extreme end of it, near the flag-pole. There he doubled up in limp agony, for the Wheeling "stogie" joined with the surge and jar of the screw to sieve out his soul. His head swelled; sparks of fire danced before his eyes; his body seemed to lose weight, while his heels wavered in the breeze. He was fainting from sea-sickness, and a roll of the ship tilted him over the rail on to the smooth lip of the turtle-back. Then a low, grey mother-wave swung out of the fog, tucked Harvey under one arm, so to speak, and pulled him off and away to leeward; the great green closed over him, and he went quietly to sleep.

He was roused by the sound of a dinner-horn such as they used to blow at a summer-school he had once attended in the Adirondacks. Slowly he remembered that he was Harvey Cheyne,

drowned and dead in mid-ocean, but was too weak to fit things together. A new smell filled his nostrils; wet and clammy chills ran down his back, and he was helplessly full of salt water. When he opened his eyes, he perceived that he was still on the top of the sea, for it was running round him in silver-coloured hills, and he was lying on a pile of half-dead fish, looking at a broad human back clothed in a blue jersey.

"It's no good," thought the boy. "I'm dead, sure enough, and this thing is in charge."

He groaned, and the figure turned its head, showing a pair of little gold rings half hidden in curly black hair.

"Aha! You feel some pretty well now?" it said. "Lie still so: we trim better."

With a swift jerk he sculled the flickering boat-head on to a foamless sea that lifted her twenty full feet, only to slide her into a glassy pit beyond. But this mountain-climbing did not interrupt blue-jersey's talk. "Fine good job, *I* say, that I catch you. Eh, wha-at? Better good job, *I* say, your boat not catch me. How you come to fall out?"

"I was sick," said Harvey; "sick, and couldn't help it."

"Just in time I blow my horn, and your boat she yaw a little. Then I see you come all down. Eh, wha-at? I think you are cut into baits by the screw, but you dreeft — dreeft to me, and I

make a big fish of you. So you shall not die this time."

"Where am I?" said Harvey, who could not see that life was particularly safe where he lay.

"You are with me in the dory—Manuel my name, and I come from schooner *We're Here* of Gloucester. I live to Gloucester. By-and-by we get supper. Eh, wha-at?"

He seemed to have two pairs of hands and a head of cast-iron, for, not content with blowing through a big conch-shell, he must needs stand up to it, swaying with the sway of the flat-bottomed dory, and send a grinding, thuttering shriek through the fog. How long this entertainment lasted, Harvey could not remember, for he lay back terrified at the sight of the smoking swells. He fancied he heard a gun and a horn and shouting. Something bigger than the dory, but quite as lively, loomed alongside. Several voices talked at once; he was dropped into a dark, heaving hole, where men in oilskins gave him a hot drink and took off his clothes, and he fell asleep.

When he waked he listened for the first breakfast-bell on the steamer, wondering why his stateroom had grown so small. Turning, he looked into a narrow, triangular cave, lit by a lamp hung against a huge square beam. A three-cornered table within arm's reach ran from the angle of the

bows to the foremast. At the after end, behind a well-used Plymouth stove, sat a boy about his own age, with a flat red face and a pair of twinkling grey eyes. He was dressed in a blue jersey and high rubber boots. Several pairs of the same sort of foot-wear, an old cap, and some worn-out woolen socks lay on the floor, and black and yellow oilskins swayed to and fro beside the bunks. The place was packed as full of smells as a bale is of cotton. The oilskins had a peculiarly thick flavour of their own which made a sort of background to the smells of fried fish, burnt grease, paint, pepper, and stale tobacco; but these, again, were all hooped together by one encircling smell of ship and salt water. Harvey saw with disgust that there were no sheets on his bed-place. He was lying on a piece of dingy ticking full of lumps and nubbles. Then, too, the boat's motion was not that of a steamer. She was neither sliding nor rolling, but rather wriggling herself about in a silly, aimless way, like a colt at the end of a halter. Water-noises ran by close to his ear, and beams creaked and whined about him. All these things made him grunt despairingly and think of his mother.

"Feelin' better?" said the boy, with a grin. "Hev some coffee?" He brought a tin cup full, and sweetened it with molasses.

"Is n't there milk?" said Harvey, looking

round the dark double tier of bunks as if he expected to find a cow there.

"Well, no," said the boy. "Ner there ain't likely to be till 'baout mid-September. 'Tain't bad coffee. I made it."

Harvey drank in silence, and the boy handed him a plate full of pieces of crisp fried pork, which he ate ravenously.

"I've dried your clothes. Guess they've shrunk some," said the boy. "They ain't our style much — none of 'em. Twist round an' see ef you're hurt any."

Harvey stretched himself in every direction, but could not report any injuries.

"That's good," the boy said heartily. "Fix yerself an' go on deck. Dad wants to see you. I'm his son,— Dan, they call me,— an' I'm cook's helper an' everything else aboard that's too dirty for the men. There ain't no boy here 'cep' me sence Otto went overboard — an' he was only a Dutchy, an' twenty year old at that. How'd you come to fall off in a dead flat ca'am?"

"'Twasn't a calm," said Harvey, sulkily. "It was a gale, and I was seasick. 'Guess I must have rolled over the rail."

"There was a little common swell yes'day an' last night," said the boy. "But ef thet's your notion of a gale —" He whistled. "You'll know more 'fore you're through. Hurry! Dad's waitin'."

Like many other unfortunate young people, Harvey had never in all his life received a direct order — never, at least, without long, and sometimes tearful, explanations of the advantages of obedience and the reasons for the request. Mrs. Cheyne lived in fear of breaking his spirit, which, perhaps, was the reason that she herself walked on the edge of nervous prostration. He could not see why he should be expected to hurry for any man's pleasure, and said so. "Your dad can come down here if he's so anxious to talk to me. I want him to take me to New York right away. It'll pay him."

Dan opened his eyes, as the size and beauty of this joke dawned on him. "Say, dad!" he shouted up the fo'c'sle hatch, "he says you kin slip down an' see him ef you're anxious that way. 'Hear, dad?"

The answer came back in the deepest voice Harvey had ever heard from a human chest: "Quit foolin', Dan, and send him to me."

Dan sniggered, and threw Harvey his warped bicycle shoes. There was something in the tones on the deck that made the boy dissemble his extreme rage and console himself with the thought of gradually unfolding the tale of his own and his father's wealth on the voyage home. This rescue would certainly make him a hero among his friends for life. He hoisted himself on deck up

a perpendicular ladder, and stumbled aft, over a score of obstructions, to where a small, thick-set, clean-shaven man with grey eyebrows sat on a step that led up to the quarter-deck. The swell had passed in the night, leaving a long, oily sea, dotted round the horizon with the sails of a dozen fishing-boats. Between them lay little black specks, showing where the dories were out fishing. The schooner, with a triangular riding-sail on the mainmast, played easily at anchor, and except for the man by the cabin-roof — "house" they call it — she was deserted.

"'Mornin'— good afternoon, I should say. You've nigh slep' the clock around, young feller," was the greeting.

"'Mornin'," said Harvey. He did not like being called "young feller"; and, as one rescued from drowning, expected sympathy. His mother suffered agonies whenever he got his feet wet; but this mariner did not seem excited.

"Naow let's hear all abaout it. It's quite providential, first an' last, fer all concerned. What might be your name? Where from (we mistrust it's Noo York), an' where baound (we mistrust it's Europe)?"

Harvey gave his name, the name of the steamer, and a short history of the accident, winding up with a demand to be taken back immediately to

New York, where his father would pay anything any one chose to name.

"H'm," said the shaven man, quite unmoved by the end of Harvey's speech. "I can't say we think special of any man, or boy even, that falls overboard from that kind o' packet in a flat ca'am. Least of all when his excuse is thet he's seasick."

"Excuse!" cried Harvey. "D'you suppose I'd fall overboard into your dirty little boat for fun?"

"Not knowin' what your notions o' fun may be, I can't rightly say, young feller. But if I was *you*, I wouldn't call the boat which, under Providence, was the means o' savin' ye, names. In the first place, it's blame irreligious. In the second, it's annoyin' to my feelin's — an' I'm Disko Troop o' the *We're Here* o' Gloucester, which you don't seem rightly to know."

"I don't know and I don't care," said Harvey. "I'm grateful enough for being saved and all that, of course; but I want you to understand that the sooner you take me back to New York the better it'll pay you."

"Meanin'— haow?" Troop raised one shaggy eyebrow over a suspiciously mild blue eye.

"Dollars and cents," said Harvey, delighted to think that he was making an impression. "Cold dollars and cents." He thrust a hand into a pocket, and threw out his stomach a little, which

was his way of being grand. "You've done the best day's work you ever did in your life when you pulled me in. I'm all the son Harvey Cheyne has."

"He's bin favoured," said Disko, drily.

"And if you don't know who Harvey Cheyne is, you don't know much — that's all. Now turn her around and let's hurry."

Harvey had a notion that the greater part of America was filled with people discussing and envying his father's dollars.

"Mebbe I do, an' mebbe I don't. Take a reef in your stummick, young feller. It's full o' *my* vittles."

Harvey heard a chuckle from Dan, who was pretending to be busy by the stump-foremast, and the blood rushed to his face. "We'll pay for that too," he said. "When do you suppose we shall get to New York?"

"I don't use Noo York any. Ner Boston. We may see Eastern Point abaout September; an' your pa — I'm real sorry I hain't heerd tell of him — may give me ten dollars efter all your talk. Then o' course he mayn't."

"Ten dollars! Why, see here, I —" Harvey dived into his pocket for the wad of bills. All he brought up was a soggy packet of cigarettes.

"Not lawful currency, an' bad for the lungs. Heave 'em overboard, young feller, and try ag'in."

"It's been stolen!" cried Harvey, hotly.

"You'll hev to wait till you see your pa to reward me, then?"

"A hundred and thirty-four dollars — all stolen," said Harvey, hunting wildly through his pockets. "Give them back."

A curious change flitted across old Troop's hard face. "What might *you* have been doin' at your time o' life with one hundred an' thirty-four dollars, young feller?"

"It was part of my pocket-money — for a month." This Harvey thought would be a knock-down blow, and it was — indirectly.

"Oh! One hundred and thirty-four dollars is only part of his pocket-money — for one month only! You don't remember hittin' anything when you fell over, do you? Crack ag'in' a stanchion, le's say. Old man Hasken o' the *East Wind*" — Troop seemed to be talking to himself — "he tripped on a hatch an' butted the mainmast with his head — hardish. 'Baout three weeks afterwards, old man Hasken he would hev it that the *East Wind* was a commerce-destroyin' man-o'-war, an' so he declared war on Sable Island because it was Bridish, an' the shoals run aout too far. They sewed him up in a bed-bag, his head an' feet appearin', fer the rest o' the trip, an' now he's to home in Essex playin' with little rag dolls."

Harvey choked with rage, but Troop went on

consolingly: "We're sorry fer you. We're very sorry fer you — an' so young. We won't say no more abaout the money, I guess."

"'Course you won't. You stole it."

"Suit yourself. We stole it ef it's any comfort to you. Naow, abaout goin' back. Allowin' we could do it, which we can't, you ain't in no fit state to go back to your home, an' *we've* jest come on to the Banks, workin' fer our bread. *We* don't see the ha'af of a hundred dollars a month, let alone pocket-money; an' with good luck we'll be ashore again somewheres abaout the first weeks o' September."

"But — but it's May now, and I can't stay here doin' nothing just because you want to fish. I *can't*, I tell you!"

"Right an' jest; jest *an'* right. No one asks you to do nothin'. There's a heap as you *can* do, for Otto he went overboard on Le Have. I mistrust he lost his grip in a gale we f'und there. Anyways, he never come back to deny it. *You've* turned up, plain, plumb providential for all concerned. I mistrust, though, there's ruther few things you kin do. Ain't thet so?"

"I can make it lively for you and your crowd when we get ashore," said Harvey, with a vicious nod, murmuring vague threats about "piracy," at which Troop almost — not quite — smiled.

"Excep' talk. I'd forgot that. You ain't

asked to talk more'n you've a mind to aboard the *We're Here*. Keep your eyes open, an' help Dan to do ez he's bid, an' sechlike, an' I'll give you — you ain't wuth it, but I'll give — ten an' a ha'af a month; say thirty-five at the end o' the trip. A little work will ease up your head, an' you kin tell us all abaout your dad an' your ma an' your money efterwards."

"She's on the steamer," said Harvey, his eyes filling with tears. "Take me to New York at once."

"Poor woman — poor woman! When she has you back she'll forgit it all, though. There's eight of us on the *We're Here*, an' ef we went back naow — it's more'n a thousand mile — we'd lose the season. The men they wouldn't hev it, allowin' I was agreeable."

"But my father would make it all right."

"He'd try. I don't doubt he'd try," said Troop; "but a whole season's catch is eight men's bread; an' you'll be better in your health when you see him in the fall. Go forward an' help Dan. It's ten an' a ha'af a month, ez I said, an', o' course, all f'und, same ez the rest o' us."

"Do you mean I'm to clean pots and pans and things?" said Harvey.

"An' other things. You've no call to shout, young feller."

"I won't! My father will give you enough to buy this dirty little fish-kettle"— Harvey stamped

on the deck — "ten times over, if you take me to New York safe; and — and — you're in a hundred and thirty by me, anyway."

"Ha-ow?" said Troop, the iron face darkening.

"How? You know how, well enough. On top of all that, you want me to do menial work" — Harvey was very proud of that adjective — "till the Fall. I tell you I will *not*. You hear?"

Troop regarded the top of the mainmast with deep interest for a while, as Harvey harangued fiercely all around him.

"Hsh!" he said at last. "I'm figurin' out my responsibilities in my own mind. It's a matter o' jedgment."

Dan stole up and plucked Harvey by the elbow. "Don't go to tamperin' with dad any more," he pleaded. "You've called him a thief two or three times over, an' he don't take that from any livin' bein'."

"I won't!" Harvey almost shrieked, disregarding the advice; and still Troop meditated.

"'Seems kinder unneighbourly," he said at last, his eye travelling down to Harvey. "I don't blame you, not a mite, young feller, nor you won't blame *me* when the bile's out o' your systim. 'Be sure you sense what I say? Ten an' a ha'af fer second boy on the schooner — an' all f'und — fer to teach you *an'* fer the sake o' your health. Yes or no?"

"No!" said Harvey. "Take me back to New York or I'll see you—"

He did not exactly remember what followed. He was lying in the scuppers, holding on to a nose that bled, while Troop looked down on him serenely.

"Dan," he said to his son, "I was sot ag'in' this young feller when I first saw him, on account o' hasty jedgments. Never you be led astray by hasty jedgments, Dan. Naow I'm sorry for him, because he's clear distracted in his upper works. He ain't responsible fer the names he's give me, nor fer his other statements —nor fer jumpin' overboard, which I'm abaout ha'af convinced he did. You be gentle with him, Dan, 'r I'll give you twice what I've give him. Them hemmeridges clears the head. Let him sluice it off!"

Troop went down solemnly into the cabin, where he and the older men bunked, leaving Dan to comfort the luckless heir to thirty millions.

CHAPTER II

"I WARNED ye," said Dan, as the drops fell thick and fast on the dark, oiled planking. "Dad ain't noways hasty, but you fair earned it. Pshaw! there's no sense takin' on so." Harvey's shoulders were rising and falling in spasms of dry sobbing. "I know the feelin'. First time dad laid me out was the last — and that was my first trip. Makes ye feel sickish an' lonesome. *I* know."

"It does," moaned Harvey. "That man's either crazy or drunk, and — and I can't do anything."

"Don't say that to dad," whispered Dan. "He's set ag'in' all liquor, an' — well, he told me *you* was the madman. What in creation made you call him a thief? He's my dad."

Harvey sat up, mopped his nose, and told the story of the missing wad of bills. "I'm not crazy," he wound up. "Only — your father has never seen more than a five-dollar bill at a time, and *my* father could buy up this boat once a week and never miss it."

"You don't know what the *We're Here's* worth.

Your dad must hev a pile o' money. How did he git it? Dad sez loonies can't shake out a straight yarn. Go ahead."

"In gold-mines and things, West."

"I've read o' that kind o' business. Out West, too? Does he go around with a pistol on a trick-pony, same ez the circus? They call that the Wild West, and I've heard that their spurs an' bridles was solid silver."

"You *are* a chump!" said Harvey, amused in spite of himself. "My father hasn't any use for ponies. When he wants to ride he takes his car."

"Haow? Lobster-car?"

"No. His own private car, of course. You've seen a private car some time in your life?"

"Slatin Beeman he hez one," said Dan, cautiously. "I saw her at the Union Depot in Boston, with three niggers hoggin' her run." (Dan meant cleaning the windows.) "But Slatin Beeman he owns 'baout every railroad on Long Island, they say; an' they say he's bought 'baout ha'af Noo Hampshire an' run a line-fence around her, an' filled her up with lions an' tigers an' bears an' buffalo an' crocodiles an' such all. Slatin Beeman he's a millionaire. I've seen *his* car. Yes?"

"Well, my father's what they call a multi-millionaire; and he has two private cars. One's

named for me, the 'Harvey,' and one for my mother, the 'Constance.'"

"Hold on," said Dan. "Dad don't ever let me swear, but I guess *you* can. 'Fore we go ahead, I want you to say hope you may die if you're lying."

"Of course," said Harvey.

"Thet ain't 'nuff. Say, 'Hope I may die if I ain't speakin' truth.'"

"Hope I may die right here," said Harvey, "if every word I've spoken isn't the cold truth."

"Hundred an' thirty-four dollars an' all?" said Dan. "I heard ye talkin' to dad, an' I ha'af looked you'd be swallered up, same's Jonah."

Harvey protested himself red in the face. Dan was a shrewd young person along his own lines, and ten minutes' questioning convinced him that Harvey was not lying — much. Besides, he had bound himself by the most terrible oath known to boyhood, and yet he sat, alive, with a red-ended nose, in the scuppers, recounting marvels upon marvels.

"Gosh!" said Dan at last, from the very bottom of his soul, when Harvey had completed an inventory of the car named in his honour. Then a grin of mischievous delight overspread his broad face. "I believe you, Harvey. Dad's made a mistake fer once in his life."

"He has, sure," said Harvey, who was meditating an early revenge.

"He'll be mad clear through. Dad jest hates to be mistook in his jedgments." Dan lay back and slapped his thigh. "Oh, Harvey, don't you spile the catch by lettin' on."

"I don't want to be knocked down again. I'll get even with him, though."

"Never heard any man ever got even with dad. But he'd knock ye down again sure. The more he was mistook the more he'd do it. But gold-mines *and* pistols —"

"I never said a word about pistols," Harvey cut in, for he was on his oath.

"Thet's so; no more you did. Two private cars, then, one named fer you an' one fer her; an' two hundred dollars a month pocket-money, all knocked into the scuppers fer not workin' fer ten an' a ha'af a month! It's the top haul o' the season." He exploded with noiseless chuckles.

"Then I was right?" said Harvey, who thought he had found a sympathiser.

"You was wrong; the wrongest kind o' wrong! You take right hold an' pitch in 'longside o' me, or you'll catch it, an' I'll catch it fer backin' you up. Dad always gives me double helps 'cause I'm his son, an' he hates favourin' folk. 'Guess you're kinder mad at dad. I've been that way time an' again. But dad's a mighty jest man; all the fleet says so."

"Looks like justice, this, don't it?" Harvey pointed to his outraged nose.

"Thet's nothin'. Lets the shore blood outer you. Dad did it for yer health. Say, though, I can't have dealin's with a man that thinks me or dad or any one on the *We're Here's* a thief. We ain't any common wharf-end crowd by any manner o' means. We're fishermen, an' we've shipped together for six years an' more. Don't you make any mistake on *that!* I told ye dad don't let me swear. He calls 'em vain oaths, and pounds me; but ef I could say what you said 'baout your pap an' his fixin's, I'd say that 'baout your dollars. I dunno what was in your pockets when I dried your kit, fer I didn't look to see; but I'd say, using the very same words ez you used jest now, neither me nor dad — an' we was the only two that teched you after you was brought aboard — knows anythin' 'baout the money. Thet's *my* say. Naow?"

The bloodletting had certainly cleared Harvey's brain, and maybe the loneliness of the sea had something to do with it. "That's all right," he said. Then he looked down confusedly. "'Seems to me that for a fellow just saved from drowning I haven't been over and above grateful, Dan."

"Well, you was shook up and silly," said Dan. "Anyway, there was only dad an' me aboard to see it. The cook he don't count."

"I might have thought about losing the bills

that way," Harvey said, half to himself, "instead of calling everybody in sight a thief. Where's your father?"

"In the cabin. What d'you want o' him again?"

"You'll see," said Harvey, and he stepped, rather groggily, for his head was still singing, to the cabin steps, where the little ship's clock hung in plain sight of the wheel. Troop, in the chocolate-and-yellow painted cabin, was busy with a note-book and an enormous black pencil, which he sucked hard from time to time.

"I haven't acted quite right," said Harvey, surprised at his own meekness.

"What's wrong naow?" said the skipper. "Walked into Dan, hev ye?"

"No; it's about you."

"I'm here to listen."

"Well, I — I'm here to take things back," said Harvey, very quickly. "When a man's saved from drowning —" he gulped.

"Ey? You'll make a man yet ef you go on this way."

"He oughtn't begin by calling people names."

"Jest an' right — right an' jest," said Troop, with the ghost of a dry smile.

"So I'm here to say I'm sorry." Another big gulp.

Troop heaved himself slowly off the locker he was sitting on and held out an eleven-inch hand.

"I mistrusted 'twould do you sights o' good; an' this shows I weren't mistook in my jedgments." A smothered chuckle on deck caught his ear. "I am very seldom mistook in my jedgments." The eleven-inch hand closed on Harvey's, numbing it to the elbow. "We'll put a little more gristle to that 'fore we've done with you, young feller; an' I don't think any worse of ye fer anythin' thet's gone by. You wasn't fairly responsible. Go right abaout your business an' you won't take no hurt."

"You're white," said Dan, as Harvey regained the deck, flushed to the tips of his ears.

"I don't feel it," said he.

"I didn't mean that way. I heard what dad said. When dad allows he don't think the worse of any man, dad's give himself away. He hates to be mistook in his jedgments, too. Ho! ho! Onct dad *has* a jedgment, he'd sooner dip his colours to the British than change it. I'm glad it's settled right eend up. Dad's right when he says he can't take you back. It's all the livin' we make here — fishin'. The men'll be back like sharks after a dead whale in ha'af an hour."

"What for?" said Harvey.

"Supper, o' course. Don't your stummick tell you? You've a heap to learn."

"'Guess I have," said Harvey, dolefully, looking at the tangle of ropes and blocks overhead.

"She's a daisy," said Dan, enthusiastically, misunderstanding the look. "Wait till our mainsail's bent, an' she walks home with all her salt wet. There's some work first, though." He pointed down into the darkness of the open main-hatch between the two masts.

"What's that for? It's all empty," said Harvey.

"You an' me an' a few more hev got to fill it," said Dan. "That's where the fish goes."

"Alive?" said Harvey.

"Well, no. They're so's to be ruther dead — an' flat — an' salt. There's a hundred hogs-head o' salt in the bins; an' we hain't more'n covered our dunnage to now."

"Where are the fish, though?"

"'In the sea, they say; in the boats, we pray,'" said Dan, quoting a fisherman's proverb. "You come in last night with 'baout forty of 'em."

He pointed to a sort of wooden pen just in front of the quarter-deck.

"You an' me we'll sluice that out when they're through. 'Send we'll hev full pens to-night! I've seen her down ha'af a foot with fish waitin' to clean, an' we stood to the tables till we was splittin' ourselves instid o' them, we was so sleepy. Yes, they're comin' in naow." Dan looked over the low bulwarks at half a dozen dories rowing towards them over the shining, silky sea.

"I've never seen the sea from so low down," said Harvey. "It's fine."

The low sun made the water all purple and pinkish, with golden lights on the barrels of the long swells, and blue and green mackerel shades in the hollows. Each schooner in sight seemed to be pulling her dories towards her by invisible strings, and the little black figures in the tiny boats pulled like clockwork toys.

"They've struck on good," said Dan, between his half-shut eyes. "Manuel hain't room fer another fish. Low ez a lily-pad in still water, ain't he?"

"Which is Manuel? I don't see how you can tell 'em 'way off, as you do."

"Last boat to the south'ard. He f'und you last night," said Dan, pointing. "Manuel rows Portugoosey; ye can't mistake him. East o' him — *he's* a heap better'n he rows — is Pennsylvania. Loaded with saleratus, by the looks of him. East o' him — see how pretty they string out all along — with the humpy shoulders, is Long Jack. He's a Galway man inhabitin' South Boston, where they all live mostly, an' mostly them Galway men are good in a boat. North, away yonder — you'll hear him tune up in a minute — is Tom Platt. Man-o'-war's man he was on the old *Ohio* — first of our navy, he says, to go araound the Horn. He never talks of much else, 'cept when he sings, but

he has fair fishin' luck. There! What did I tell you?"

A melodious bellow stole across the water from the northern dory. Harvey heard something about somebody's hands and feet being cold, and then:

"Bring forth the chart, the doleful chart;
See where them mountings meet!
The clouds are thick around their heads,
The mists around their feet."

"Full boat," said Dan, with a chuckle. "If he gives us 'O Captain' it's toppin' full."

The bellow continued:

"And naow to thee, O Capting,
Most earnestly I pray
That they shall never bury me
In church or cloister grey."

"Double game for Tom Platt. He'll tell you all about the old *Ohio* to-morrow. 'See that blue dory behind him? He's my uncle,—dad's own brother,—an' ef there's any bad luck loose on the Banks she'll fetch up ag'in' Uncle Salters, sure. Look how tender he's rowin'. I'll lay my wage and share he's the only man stung up to-day —an' he's stung up good."

"What'll sting him?" said Harvey, getting interested.

"Strawberries, mostly. Punkins, sometimes, an' sometimes lemons an' cucumbers. Yes, he's stung up from his elbows down. That man's luck's perfectly paralysin'. Naow we'll take a-holt o' the tackles an' h'ist 'em in. Is it true, what you told me jest now, that you never done a hand's turn o' work in all your born life? 'Must feel kinder awful, don't it?"

"I'm going to try to work, anyway," Harvey replied stoutly. "Only it's all dead new."

"Lay a-holt o' that tackle, then. Behind ye!"

Harvey grabbed at a rope and long iron hook dangling from one of the stays of the mainmast, while Dan pulled down another that ran from something he called a "topping-lift," as Manuel drew alongside in his loaded dory. The Portuguese smiled a brilliant smile that Harvey learned to know well later, and a short-handled fork began to throw fish into the pen on deck. "Two hundred and thirty-one," he shouted.

"Give him the hook," said Dan, and Harvey ran it into Manuel's hands. He slipped it through a loop of rope at the dory's bow, caught Dan's tackle, hooked it to the stern-becket, and clambered into the schooner.

"Pull!" shouted Dan; and Harvey pulled, astonished to find how easily the dory rose.

"Hold on; she don't nest in the crosstrees!"

Dan laughed; and Harvey held on, for the boat lay in the air above his head.

"Lower away," Dan shouted; and as Harvey lowered, Dan swayed the light boat with one hand till it landed softly just behind the mainmast. "They don't weigh nothin' empty. Thet was right smart fer a passenger. There's more trick to it in a sea-way."

"Ah ha!" said Manuel, holding out a brown hand. "You are some pretty well now? This time last night the fish they fish for you. Now you fish for fish. Eh, wha-at?"

"I'm — I'm ever so grateful," Harvey stammered, and his unfortunate hand stole to his pocket once more, but he remembered that he had no money to offer. When he knew Manuel better the mere thought of the mistake he might have made would cover him with hot, uneasy blushes in his bunk.

"There is no to be thankful for to *me!*" said Manuel. "How shall I leave you dreeft, dreeft all around the Banks? Now you are a fisherman — eh, wha-at? Ouh! Auh!" He bent backward and forward stiffly from the hips to get the kinks out of himself.

"I have not cleaned boat to-day. Too busy. They struck on queek. Danny, my son, clean for me."

Harvey moved forward at once. Here was

something he could do for the man who had saved his life.

Dan threw him a swab, and he leaned over the dory, mopping up the slime clumsily, but with great good-will. "Hike out the foot-boards; they slide in them grooves," said Dan. "Swab 'em an' lay 'em down. Never let a foot-board jam. Ye may want her bad some day. Here's Long Jack."

A stream of glittering fish flew into the pen from a dory alongside.

"Manuel, you take the tackle. I'll fix the tables. Harvey, clear Manuel's boat. Long Jack's nestin' on the top of her."

Harvey looked up from his swabbing at the bottom of another dory just above his head.

"Jest like the Injian puzzle-boxes, ain't they?" said Dan, as the one boat dropped into the other.

"Takes to ut like a duck to water," said Long Jack, a grizzly-chinned, long-lipped Galway man, bending to and fro exactly as Manuel had done. Disko in the cabin growled up the hatchway, and they could hear him suck his pencil.

"Wan hunder an' forty-nine an' a half — bad luck to ye, Discobolus!" said Long Jack. "I'm murderin' meself to fill your pockuts. Slate ut for a bad catch. The Portugee has bate me."

Whack came another dory alongside, and more fish shot into the pen.

"Two hundred and three. Let's look at the passenger!" The speaker was even larger than the Galway man, and his face was made curious by a purple cut running slantways from his left eye to the right corner of his mouth.

Not knowing what else to do, Harvey swabbed each dory as it came down, pulled out the footboards, and laid them in the bottom of the boat.

"He's caught on good," said the scarred man, who was Tom Platt, watching him critically. "There are two ways o' doin' everything. One's fisher-fashion — any end first an' a slippery hitch over all — an' the other's —"

"What we did on the old *Ohio!*" Dan interrupted, brushing into the knot of men with a long board on legs. "Git out o' here, Tom Platt, an' leave me fix the tables."

He jammed one end of the board into two nicks in the bulwarks, kicked out the leg, and ducked just in time to avoid a swinging blow from the man-o'-war's man.

"An' they did that on the *Ohio*, too, Danny. See?" said Tom Platt, laughing.

"'Guess they was swivel-eyed, then, fer it didn't git home, and I know who'll find his boots on the main-truck ef he don't leave us alone. Haul ahead! I'm busy, can't ye see?"

"Danny, ye lie on the cable an' sleep all day," said Long Jack. "You're the hoight av impi-

dence, an' I'm persuaded ye'll corrupt our supercargo in a week."

"His name's Harvey," said Dan, waving two strangely shaped knives, "an' he'll be worth five of any Sou' Boston clam-digger 'fore long." He laid the knives tastefully on the table, cocked his head on one side, and admired the effect.

"*I* think it's forty-two," said a small voice overside, and there was a roar of laughter as another voice answered, "Then my luck's turned fer onct, 'caze I'm forty-five, though I be stung outer all shape."

"Forty-two *or* forty-five. I've lost count," the small voice said.

"It's Penn an' Uncle Salters caountin' catch. This beats the circus any day," said Dan. "Jest look at 'em!"

"Come in — come in!" roared Long Jack. "It's wet out yondher, children."

"Forty-two, ye said." This was Uncle Salters.

"I'll count again, then," the voice replied meekly.

The two dories swung together and bunted into the schooner's side.

"Patience o' Jerusalem!" snapped Uncle Salters, backing water with a splash. "What possest a farmer like you to set foot in a boat beats me. You've nigh stove me all up."

"I am sorry, Mr. Salters. I came to sea on

account of nervous dyspepsia. You advised me, I think."

"You an' your nervis dyspepsy be drowned in the Whale-hole," roared Uncle Salters, a fat and tubly little man. "You're comin' down on me ag'in. *Did* ye say forty-two or forty-five?"

"I've forgotten, Mr. Salters. Let's count."

"Don't see as it *could* be forty-five. *I'm* forty-five," said Uncle Salters. "You count keerful, Penn."

Disko Troop came out of the cabin. "Salters, you pitch your fish in naow at once," he said in the tone of authority.

"Don't spile the catch, dad," Dan murmured. "Them two are on'y jest beginnin'."

"Mother av delight! He's forkin' them wan by wan," howled Long Jack, as Uncle Salters got to work laboriously; the little man in the other dory counting a line of notches on the gunwale.

"That was last week's catch," he said, looking up plaintively, his forefinger where he had left off.

Manuel nudged Dan, who darted to the after-tackle, and, leaning far overside, slipped the hook into the stern-rope as Manuel made her fast forward. The others pulled gallantly and swung the boat in — man, fish, and all.

"One, two, four — nine," said Tom Platt, counting with a practised eye. "Forty-seven. Penn, you're it!" Dan let the after-tackle run, and slid

him out of the stern on to the deck amid a torrent of his own fish.

"Hold on!" roared Uncle Salters, bobbing by the waist. "Hold on, I'm a bit mixed in my caount."

He had no time to protest, but was hove inboard and treated like "Pennsylvania."

"Forty-one," said Tom Platt. "Beat by a farmer, Salters. An' you sech a sailor, too!"

"'Tweren't fair caount," said he, stumbling out of the pen; "an' I'm stung up all to pieces."

His thick hands were puffy and mottled purply white.

"Some folks will find strawberry-bottom," said Dan, addressing the newly risen moon, "ef they hev to dive fer it, seems to me."

"An' others," said Uncle Salters, "eats the fat o' the land in sloth, an' mocks their own blood-kin."

"Seat ye! Seat ye!" a voice Harvey had not heard called from the fo'c'sle. Disko Troop, Tom Platt, Long Jack, and Salters went forward on the word. Little Penn bent above his square deep-sea reel and the tangled cod-lines; Manuel lay down full length on the deck, and Dan dropped into the hold, where Harvey heard him banging casks with a hammer.

"Salt," he said, returning. "Soon as we're through supper we git to dressing-down. You'll pitch to dad. Tom Platt an' dad they stow to-

gether, an' you'll hear 'em arguin'. We're second ha'af, you an' me an' Manuel an' Penn — the youth an' beauty o' the boat."

"What's the good of that?" said Harvey. "I'm hungry."

"They'll be through in a minute. Snff! She smells good to-night. Dad ships a good cook ef he *do* suffer with his brother. It's a full catch to-day, ain't it?" He pointed at the pens piled high with cod. "What water did ye hev, Manuel?"

"Twenty-fife father," said the Portuguese, sleepily. "They strike on good an' queek. Some day I show you, Harvey."

The moon was beginning to walk on the still sea before the elder men came aft. The cook had no need to cry "second half." Dan and Manuel were down the hatch and at table ere Tom Platt, last and most deliberate of the elders, had finished wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Harvey followed Penn, and sat down before a tin pan of cod's tongues and sounds, mixed with scraps of pork and fried potato, a loaf of hot bread, and some black and powerful coffee. Hungry as they were, they waited while "Pennsylvania" solemnly asked a blessing. Then they stoked in silence till Dan drew breath over his tin cup and demanded of Harvey how he felt.

"'Most full, but there's just room for another piece."

The cook was a huge, jet-black negro, and, unlike all the negroes Harvey had met, did not talk, contenting himself with smiles and dumb-show invitations to eat more.

"See, Harvey," said Dan, rapping with his fork on the table, "it's jest as I said. The young an' handsome men — like me an' Pennsy an' you an' Manuel — we 're second ha'af, an' we eats when the first ha'af are through. They're the old fish; and they're mean an' humpy, an' their stummicks has to be humoured; so they come first, which they don't deserve. Ain't that so, doctor?"

The cook nodded.

"Can't he talk?" said Harvey, in a whisper.

"'Nough to git along. Not much o' anything we know. His natural tongue's kinder curious. Comes from the in'ards of Cape Breton, he does, where the farmers speak home-made Scotch. Cape Breton's full o' niggers whose folk run in there durin' aour war, an' they talk like the farmers — all huffy-chuffy."

"That is not Scotch," said "Pennsylvania." "That is Gaelic. So I read in a book."

"Penn reads a heap. Most of what he says is so —'cep' when it comes to a caount o' fish — eh?"

"Does your father just let them *say* how many they've caught without checking them?" said Harvey.

"Why, yes. Where's the sense of a man lyin' fer a few old cod?"

"'Was a man once lied for his catch," Manuel put in. "Lied every day. Fife, ten, twenty-fife more fish than come he say there was."

"Where was that?" said Dan. "None o' aour folk."

"Frenchman of Anguille."

"Ah! Them West Shore Frenchmen don't caount, anyway. Stands to reason they can't caount. Ef you run acrost any of their soft hooks, Harvey, you'll know why," said Dan, with an awful contempt.

"Always more and never less,
Every time we come to dress,"

Long Jack roared down the hatch, and the "second ha'af" scrambled up at once.

The shadow of the masts and rigging, with the never-furled riding-sail, rolled to and fro on the heaving deck in the moonlight; and the pile of fish by the stern shone like a dump of fluid silver. In the hold there were tramplings and rumblings where Disko Troop and Tom Platt moved among the salt-bins. Dan passed Harvey a pitchfork, and led him to the inboard end of the rough table, where Uncle Salters was drumming impatiently with a knife-haft. A tub of salt water lay at his feet.

"You pitch to dad an' Tom Platt down the hatch, an' take keer Uncle Salters don't cut yer eye out," said Dan, swinging himself into the hold. "I'll pass salt below."

Penn and Manuel stood knee-deep among cod in the pen, flourishing drawn knives. Long Jack, a basket at his feet and mittens on his hands, faced Uncle Salters at the table, and Harvey stared at the pitchfork and the tub.

"Hi!" shouted Manuel, stooping to the fish, and bringing one up with a finger under its gill and a finger in its eye. He laid it on the edge of the pen; the knife-blade glimmered with a sound of tearing, and the fish, slit from throat to vent, with a nick on either side of the neck, dropped at Long Jack's feet.

"Hi!" said Long Jack, with a scoop of his mittened hand. The cod's liver dropped in the basket. Another wrench and scoop sent the head and offal flying, and the empty fish slid across to Uncle Salters, who snorted fiercely. There was another sound of tearing, the backbone flew over the bulwarks, and the fish, headless, gutted, and open, splashed in the tub, sending the salt water into Harvey's astonished mouth. After the first yell, the men were silent. The cod moved along as though they were alive, and long ere Harvey had ceased wondering at the miraculous dexterity of it all, his tub was full.

"Pitch!" grunted Uncle Salters, without turning his head, and Harvey pitched the fish by twos and threes down the hatch.

"Hi! Pitch 'em bunchy," shouted Dan. "Don't scatter! Uncle Salters is the best splitter in the fleet. Watch him mind his book!"

Indeed, it looked a little as though the round uncle were cutting magazine pages against time. Manuel's body, cramped over from the hips, stayed like a statue; but his long arms grabbed the fish without ceasing. Little Penn toiled valiantly, but it was easy to see he was weak. Once or twice Manuel found time to help him without breaking the chain of supplies, and once Manuel howled because he had caught his finger in a Frenchman's hook. These hooks are made of soft metal, to be rebent after use; but the cod very often get away with them and are hooked again elsewhere; and that is one of the many reasons why the Gloucester boats despise the Frenchmen.

Down below, the rasping sound of rough salt rubbed on rough flesh sounded like the whirring of a grindstone—a steady undertune to the "click-nick" of the knives in the pen; the wrench and schloop of torn heads, dropped liver, and flying offal; the "caraaah" of Uncle Salters's knife scooping away backbones; and the flap of wet, opened bodies falling into the tub.

At the end of an hour Harvey would have

given the world to rest; for fresh, wet cod weigh more than you would think, and his back ached with the steady pitching. But he felt for the first time in his life that he was one of a working gang of men, took pride in the thought, and held on sullenly.

"Knife oh!" shouted Uncle Salters, at last. Penn doubled up, gasping among the fish, Manuel bowed back and forth to supple himself, and Long Jack leaned over the bulwarks. The cook appeared, noiseless as a black shadow, collected a mass of backbones and heads, and retreated.

"Blood-ends for breakfast an' head-chowder," said Long Jack, smacking his lips.

"Knife oh!" repeated Uncle Salters, waving the flat, curved splitter's weapon.

"Look by your foot, Harve," cried Dan, below.

Harvey saw half a dozen knives stuck in a cleat in the hatch combing. He dealt these around, taking over the dulled ones.

"Water!" said Disko Troop.

"Scuttle-butt's for'ard, an' the dipper's alongside. Hurry, Harve," said Dan.

He was back in a minute with a big dipperful of stale brown water which tasted like nectar, and loosed the jaws of Disko and Tom Platt.

"These are cod," said Disko. "They ain't Damarskus figs, Tom Platt, nor yet silver bars. I've told you that every single time sence we've sailed together."

"A matter o' seven seasons," returned Tom Platt, coolly. "Good stowin's good stowin' all the same, an' there's a right an' a wrong way o' stowin' ballast even. If you'd ever seen four hundred ton o' iron set into the —"

"Hi!" With a yell from Manuel the work began again, and never stopped till the pen was empty. The instant the last fish was down, Disko Troop rolled aft to the cabin with his brother; Manuel and Long Jack went forward; Tom Platt only waited long enough to slide home the hatch ere he too disappeared. In half a minute Harvey heard deep snores in the cabin, and he was staring blankly at Dan and Penn.

"I did a little better that time, Danny," said Penn, whose eyelids were heavy with sleep. "But I think it is my duty to help clean."

"'Wouldn't hev your conscience fer a thousand quintal," said Dan. "Turn in, Penn. You've no call to do boy's work. Draw a bucket, Harvey. Oh, Penn, dump these in the gurry-butt 'fore you sleep. Kin you keep awake that long?"

Penn took up the heavy basket of fish-livers, emptied them into a cask with a hinged top lashed by the fo'c'sle; then he too dropped out of sight in the cabin.

"Boys clean up after dressin' down, an' first watch in ca'am weather is boy's watch on the

We're Here." Dan sluiced the pen energetically, unshipped the table, set it up to dry in the moonlight, ran the red knife-blades through a wad of oakum, and began to sharpen them on a tiny grindstone, as Harvey threw offal and backbones overboard under his direction.

At the first splash a silvery-white ghost rose bolt upright from the oily water and sighed a weird whistling sigh. Harvey started back with a shout, but Dan only laughed. "Grampus," said he. "Beggin' fer fish-heads. They up-eend thet way when they're hungry. Breath on him like the doleful tombs, hain't he?" A horrible stench of decayed fish filled the air as the pillar of white sank, and the water bubbled oilily. "Hain't ye never seen a grampus up-eend before? You'll see 'em by hundreds 'fore ye're through. Say, it's good to hev a boy aboard again. Otto was too old, an' a Dutchy at that. Him an' me we fought consid'ble. 'Wouldn't ha' keered fer thet ef he'd hed a Christian tongue in his head. Sleepy?"

"Dead sleepy," said Harvey, nodding forward.

"'Mustn't sleep on watch. Rouse up an' see ef our anchor-light's bright an' shinin'. You're on watch now, Harve."

"Pshaw! What's to hurt us? Bright's day. Sn—orrr!"

"Jest when things happen, dad says. Fine

weather's good sleepin', an' 'fore you know, mebbe, you're cut in two by a liner, an' seventeen brass-bound officers, all gen'elmen, lift their hand to it that your lights was aout an' there was a thick fog. Harve, I've kinder took to you, but ef you nod onct more I'll lay into you with a rope's end."

The moon, who sees many strange things on the Banks, looked down on a slim youth in knickerbockers and a red jersey, staggering around the cluttered decks of a seventy-ton schooner, while behind him, waving a knotted rope, walked, after the manner of an executioner, a boy who yawned and nodded between the blows he dealt.

The lashed wheel groaned and kicked softly, the riding-sail slatted a little in the shifts of the light wind, the windlass creaked, and the miserable procession continued. Harvey expostulated, threatened, whimpered, and at last wept outright, while Dan, the words clotting on his tongue, spoke of the beauty of watchfulness, and slashed away with the rope's end, punishing the dories as often as he hit Harvey. At last the clock in the cabin struck ten, and upon the tenth stroke little Penn crept on deck. He found two boys in two tumbled heaps side by side on the main-hatch, so deeply asleep that he actually rolled them to their berths.

CHAPTER III

It was the forty-fathom slumber that clears the soul and eye and heart, and sends you to breakfast ravening. They emptied a big tin dish of juicy fragments of fish — the blood-ends the cook had collected overnight. They cleaned up the plates and pans of the elder mess, who were out fishing, sliced pork for the midday meal, swabbed down the fo'c'sle, filled the lamps, drew coal and water for the cook, and investigated the fore-hold, where the boat's stores were stacked. It was another perfect day — soft, mild, and clear; and Harvey breathed to the very bottom of his lungs.

More schooners had crept up in the night, and the long blue seas were full of sails and dories. Far away on the horizon, the smoke of some liner, her hull invisible, smudged the blue, and to eastward a big ship's topgallantsails, just lifting, made a square nick in it. Disko Troop was smoking by the roof of the cabin — one eye on the craft around, and the other on the little fly at the mainmast-head.

"When dad kerflummoxes that way," said Dan,

in a whisper, "he's doin' some high-line thinkin' fer all hands. I'll lay my wage an' share we'll make berth soon. Dad he knows the cod, an' the fleet they know dad knows. 'See 'em comin' up one by one, lookin' fer nothin' in particular, o' course, but scrowgin' on us all the time? There's the *Prince Leboo;* she's a Chat-ham boat. She's crep' up sence last night. An' see that big one with a patch in her foresail an' a new jib? She's the *Carrie Pitman* from West Chat-ham. She won't keep her canvas long onless her luck's changed since last season. She don't do much 'cep' drift. There ain't an anchor made'll hold her. . . . When the smoke puffs up in little rings like that, dad's studyin' the fish. Ef we speak to him now, he'll git mad. Las' time I did, he jest took an' hove a boot at me."

Disko Troop stared forward, the pipe between his teeth, with eyes that saw nothing. As his son said, he was studying the fish — pitting his knowledge and experience on the Banks against the roving cod in his own sea. He accepted the presence of the inquisitive schooners on the horizon as a compliment to his powers. But now that it was paid, he wished to draw away and make his berth alone, till it was time to go up to the Virgin and fish in the streets of that roaring town upon the waters. So Disko Troop thought of recent weather, and gales, currents, food-sup-

plies, and other domestic arrangements, from the point of view of a twenty-pound cod; was, in fact, for an hour a cod himself, and looked remarkably like one. Then he removed the pipe from his teeth.

"Dad," said Dan, "we've done our chores. Can't we go overside a piece? It's good catchin' weather."

"Not in that cherry-coloured rig ner them ha'af-baked brown shoes. Give him suthin' fit to wear."

"Dad's pleased — that settles it," said Dan, delightedly, dragging Harvey into the cabin, while Troop pitched a key down the steps. "Dad keeps my spare rig where he kin overhaul it, 'cause ma sez I'm keerless." He rummaged through a locker, and in less than three minutes Harvey was adorned with fisherman's rubber boots that came half up his thigh, a heavy blue jersey well darned at the elbows, a pair of nippers, and a sou'wester.

"Naow ye look somethin' like," said Dan. "Hurry!"

"Keep nigh an' handy," said Troop, "an' don't go visitin' raound the fleet. Ef any one asks you what I'm cal'latin' to do, speak the truth — fer ye don't know."

A little red dory, labelled *Hattie S.*, lay astern of the schooner. Dan hauled in the painter, and dropped lightly on to the bottom boards, while Harvey tumbled clumsily after.

"That's no way o' gettin' into a boat," said Dan. "Ef there was any sea you'd go to the bottom, sure. You got to learn to meet her."

Dan fitted the thole-pins, took the forward thwart, and watched Harvey's work. The boy had rowed, in a ladylike fashion, on the Adirondack ponds; but there is a difference between squeaking pins and well-balanced rowlocks — light sculls and stubby, eight-foot sea-oars. They stuck in the gentle swell, and Harvey grunted.

"Short! Row short!" said Dan. "Ef you cramp your oar in any kind o' sea you're liable to turn her over. Ain't she a daisy? Mine, too."

The little dory was specklessly clean. In her bows lay a tiny anchor, two jugs of water, and some seventy fathoms of thin, brown dory-roding. A tin dinner-horn rested in cleats just under Harvey's right hand, beside an ugly-looking maul, a short gaff, and a shorter wooden stick. A couple of lines, with very heavy leads and double cod-hooks, all neatly coiled on square reels, were stuck in their place by the gunwale.

"Where's the sail and mast?" said Harvey, for his hands were beginning to blister.

Dan chuckled. "Ye don't sail fishin'-dories much. Ye pull; but ye needn't pull so hard. Don't you wish you owned her?"

"Well, I guess my father might give me one or two if I asked 'em," Harvey replied. He had

been too busy to think much of his family till then.

"That's so. I forgot your dad's a millionaire. You don't act millionary any, naow. But a dory an' craft an' gear"— Dan spoke as though she were a whale-boat — "costs a heap. Think your dad 'u'd give you one fer — fer a pet like?"

"'Shouldn't wonder. It would be 'most the only thing I haven't stuck him for yet."

"'Must be an expensive kinder kid to home. Don't slitheroo thet way, Harve. Short's the trick, because no sea's ever dead still, an' the swells'll — "

Crack! The loom of the oar kicked Harvey under the chin and knocked him backward.

"That was what I was goin' to say. I hed to learn too, but *I* wasn't more than eight years old when I got my schoolin'."

Harvey regained his seat with aching jaws and a frown.

"No good gettin' mad at things, dad says. It's our own fault ef we can't handle 'em, he says. Le's try here. Manuel'll give us the water."

The "Portugee" was rocking fully a mile away, but when Dan up-ended an oar he waved his left arm three times.

"Thirty fathom," said Dan, stringing a salt clam on to the hook. "Over with the dough-boys. Bait same's I do, Harve, an' don't snarl your reel."

Dan's line was out long before Harvey had mastered the mystery of baiting and heaving out the leads. The dory drifted along easily. It was not worth while to anchor till they were sure of good ground.

"Here we come!" Dan shouted, and a shower of spray rattled on Harvey's shoulders as a big cod flapped and kicked alongside. "Muckle. Harvey, muckle! Under your hand! Quick!"

Evidently "muckle" could not be the dinner-horn, so Harvey passed over the maul, and Dan scientifically stunned the fish before he pulled it inboard, and wrenched out the hook with the short wooden stick he called a "gob-stick." Then Harvey felt a tug, and pulled up zealously.

"Why, these are strawberries!" he shouted. "Look!"

The hook had fouled among a bunch of strawberries, red on one side and white on the other — perfect reproductions of the land fruit, except that there were no leaves, and the stem was all pipy and slimy.

"Don't tech 'em! Slat 'em off. Don't —"

The warning came too late. Harvey had picked them from the hook, and was admiring them.

"Ouch!" he cried, for his fingers throbbed as though he had grasped many nettles.

"Naow ye know what strawberry-bottom means. Nothin' 'cep' fish should be teched with

the naked fingers, dad says. Slat 'em off ag'in' the gunnel, an' bait up, Harve. Lookin' won't help any. It's all in the wages."

Harvey smiled at the thought of his ten and a half dollars a month, and wondered what his mother would say if she could see him hanging over the edge of a fishing-dory in mid-ocean. She suffered agonies whenever he went out on Saranac Lake; and, by the way, Harvey remembered distinctly that he used to laugh at her anxieties. Suddenly the line flashed through his hand, stinging even through the "nippers," the woolen circlets supposed to protect it.

"He's a logy. Give him room accordin' to his strength," cried Dan. "I'll help ye."

"No, you won't," Harvey snapped, as he hung on to the line. "It's my first fish. Is — is it a whale?"

"Halibut, mebbe." Dan peered down into the water alongside, and flourished the big "muckle," ready for all chances. Something white and oval flickered and fluttered through the green. "I'll lay my wage an' share he's over a hundred. Are you so everlastin' anxious to land him alone?"

Harvey's knuckles were raw and bleeding where they had been banged against the gunwale; his face was purple-blue between excitement and exertion; he dripped with sweat, and was half blinded from staring at the circling sun-

lit ripples about the swiftly moving line. The boys were tired long ere the halibut, who took charge of them and the dory for the next twenty minutes. But the big flat fish was gaffed and hauled in at last.

"Beginner's luck," said Dan, wiping his forehead. "He's all of a hundred."

Harvey looked at the huge grey-and-mottled creature with unspeakable pride. He had seen halibut many times on marble slabs ashore, but it had never occurred to him to ask how they came inland. Now he knew; and every inch of his body ached with fatigue.

"Ef dad was along," said Dan, hauling up, "he'd read the signs plain's print. The fish are runnin' smaller an' smaller, an' you've took baout as logy a halibut's we're apt to find this trip. Yesterday's catch — did ye notice it? — was all big fish an' no halibut. Dad he'd read them signs right off. Dad says everythin' on the Banks is signs, an' can be read wrong er right. Dad's deeper'n the Whale-hole."

Even as he spoke some one fired a pistol on the *We're Here*, and a potato-basket was run up in the fore-rigging.

"What did I say, naow? That's the call fer the whole crowd. Dad's onter something, er he'd never break fishin' this time o' day. Reel up, Harve, an' we'll pull back."

They were to windward of the schooner, just ready to flirt the dory over the still sea, when sounds of woe half a mile off led them to Penn, who was careering around a fixed point, for all the world like a gigantic water-bug. The little man backed away and came down again with enormous energy, but at the end of each manœuvre his dory swung round and snubbed herself on her rope.

"We'll hev to help him, else he'll root an' seed here," said Dan.

"What's the matter?" said Harvey. This was a new world, where he could not lay down the law to his elders, but had to ask questions humbly. And the sea was horribly big and unexcited.

"Anchor's fouled. Penn's always losing 'em. Lost two this trip a'ready,—on sandy bottom, too,—an' dad says next one he loses, sure's fishin', he'll give him the kelleg. That 'u'd break Penn's heart."

"What's a 'kelleg'?" said Harvey, who had a vague idea it might be some kind of marine torture, like keel-hauling in the story-books.

"Big stone instid of an anchor. You kin see a kelleg ridin' in the bows fur's you can see a dory, an' all the fleet knows what it means. They'd guy him dreadful. Penn couldn't stand that no more'n a dog with a dipper to his tail.

He's so everlastin' sensitive. Hello, Penn! Stuck again? Don't try any more o' your patents. Come up on her, and keep your rodin' straight up an' down."

"It doesn't move," said the little man, panting. "It doesn't move at all, and indeed I tried everything."

"What's all this hurrah's-nest for'ard?" said Dan, pointing to a wild tangle of spare oars and dory-roding, all matted together by the hand of inexperience.

"Oh, that," said Penn, proudly, "is a Spanish windlass. Mr. Salters showed me how to make it; but even *that* does'nt move her."

Dan bent low over the gunwale to hide a smile, twitched once or twice on the roding, and, behold, the anchor drew at once.

"Haul up, Penn," he said, laughing, "er she 'll git stuck again."

They left him regarding the weed-hung flukes of the little anchor with big, pathetic blue eyes, and thanking them profusely.

"Oh, say, while I think of it, Harve," said Dan, when they were out of ear-shot, "Penn ain't quite all caulked. He ain't nowise dangerous, but his mind's give out. See?"

"Is that so, or is it one of your father's judgments?" Harvey asked, as he bent to his oars. He felt he was learning to handle them more easily.

"Dad ain't mistook this time. Penn's a sure-nuff loony. No, he ain't thet, exactly, so much ez a harmless ijjit. It was this way (you're rowin' quite so, Harve), an' I tell you 'cause it's right you orter know. He was a Moravian preacher once. Jacob Boller wuz his name, dad told me, an' he lived with his wife an' four children somewheres out Pennsylvania way. Well, Penn he took his folks along to a Moravian meetin',—camp-meetin', most like,—an' they stayed over jest one night in Johnstown. You've heered talk o' Johnstown?"

Harvey considered. "Yes, I have. But I don't know why. It sticks in my head same as Ashtabula."

"Both was big accidents — thet's why, Harve. Well, that one single night Penn and his folks was to the hotel Johnstown was wiped out. 'Dam bu'st an' flooded her, an' the houses struck adrift an' bumped into each other an' sunk. I've seen the pictures, an' they're dretful. Penn he saw his folk drowned all 'n a heap 'fore he rightly knew what was comin'. His mind give out from that on. He mistrusted somethin' hed happened up to Johnstown, but for the poor life of him he couldn't remember what, an' he jest drifted araound smilin' an' wonderin'. He didn't know what he was, nor yit what he hed bin, an' thet way he run ag'in' Uncle Salters, who was visitin' 'n Allegheny

City. Ha'af my mother's folks they live scattered inside o' Pennsylvania, an' Uncle Salters he visits araound winters. Uncle Salters he kinder adopted Penn, well knowin' what his trouble wuz; an' he brought him East, an' he give him work on his farm."

"Why, I heard him calling Penn a farmer last night when the boats bumped. Is your Uncle Salters a farmer?"

"Farmer!" shouted Dan. "There ain't water enough 'tween here an' Hatt'rus to wash the furrer-mould off'n *his* boots. He's jest everlastin' farmer. Why, Harve, I've seen thet man hitch up a bucket, long towards sundown, an' set twiddlin' the spigot to the scuttle-butt same's ef 'twuz a cow's bag. He's thet much farmer. Well, Penn an' he they ran the farm — up Exeter way, 'twuz. Uncle Salters he sold it this spring to a jay from Boston as wanted to build a summer-haouse, an' he got a heap for it. Well, them two loonies scratched along till, one day, Penn's church he'd belonged to — the Moravians — found out where he wuz drifted an' layin', an' wrote to Uncle Salters. 'Never heerd what they said exactly; but Uncle Salters was mad. He's a 'piscopalian mostly — but he jest let 'em hev it both sides o' the bow, 'sif he was a Baptist, an' sez he warn't goin' to give up Penn to any blame Moravian connection in Pennsylvania or anywheres else

Then he come to dad, towin' Penn,— thet was two trips back,— an' sez he an' Penn must fish a trip fer their health. 'Guess he thought the Moravians wouldn't hunt the Banks fer Jacob Boller. Dad was agreeable, fer Uncle Salters he'd been fishin' off an' on fer thirty years, when he warn't inventin' patent manures, an' he took quarter-share in the *We're Here;* an' the trip done Penn so much good, dad made a habit o' takin' him. Some day, dad sez, he'll remember his wife an' kids *an'* Johnstown, an' then, like's not, he'll die, dad sez. Don't yer talk about Johnstown ner such things to Penn, 'r Uncle Salters he'll heave ye overboard."

"Poor Penn!" murmured Harvey. "I shouldn't ever have thought Uncle Salters cared for him by the look of 'em together."

"I like Penn, though; we all do," said Dan. "We ought to ha' give him a tow, but I wanted to tell ye first."

They were close to the schooner now, the other boats a little behind them.

"You needn't heave in the dories till after dinner," said Troop, from the deck. "We'll dress-daown right off. Fix table, boys!"

"Deeper'n the Whale-deep," said Dan, with a wink, as he set the gear for dressing-down. "Look at them boats that hev edged up sence mornin'. They're all waitin' on dad. See 'em, Harve?"

"They are all alike to me." And, indeed, to a landsman the nodding schooners around seemed run from the same mould.

"They ain't, though. That yaller, dirty packet with her bowsprit steeved that way, she's the *Hope of Prague*. Nick Brady's her skipper, the meanest man on the Banks. We'll tell him so when we strike the Main Ledge. 'Way off yander's the *Day's Eye*. The two Jeraulds own her. She's from Harwich; fastish, too, an' hez good luck; but dad he'd find fish in a graveyard. Them other three, side along, they're the *Margie Smith*, *Rose*, and *Edith S. Walen*, all frum home. 'Guess we'll see the *Abbie M. Deering* to-morrer, dad, won't we? They're all slippin' over from the shoal o' 'Queereau."

"You won't see many boats to-morrow, Danny." When Troop called his son Danny, it was a sign that the old man was pleased. "Boys, we're too crowded," he went on, addressing the crew as they clambered inboard. "We'll leave 'em to bait big an' catch small." He looked at the catch in the pen, and it was curious to see how little and level the fish ran. Save for Harvey's halibut, there was nothing over fifteen pounds on deck.

"I'm waitin' on the weather," he added.

"Ye'll have to make it yourself, Disko, for there's no sign *I* can see," said Long Jack, sweeping the clear horizon.

And yet, half an hour later, as they were dressing-down, the Bank fog dropped on them, "between fish and fish," as they say. It drove steadily and in wreaths, curling and smoking along the colourless water. The men stopped dressing-down without a word. Long Jack and Uncle Salters slipped the windlass-brakes into their sockets, and began to heave up the anchor, the windlass jarring as the wet hempen cable strained on the barrel. Manuel and Tom Platt gave a hand at the last. The anchor came up with a sob, and the riding-sail bellied as Troop steadied her at the wheel. "Up jib and foresail," said he.

"Slip 'em in the smother," shouted Long Jack, making fast the jib-sheet, while the others raised the clacking, rattling rings of the foresail; and the fore-boom creaked as the *We're Here* looked up into the wind and dived off into blank, whirling white.

"There's wind behind this fog," said Troop.

It was all wonderful beyond words to Harvey; and the most wonderful part was that he heard no orders except an occasional grunt from Troop, ending with, "That's good, my son!"

"'Never seen anchor weighed before?" said Tom Platt, to Harvey gaping at the damp canvas of the foresail.

"No. Where are we going?"

"Fish and make berth, as you'll find out 'fore you've bin a week aboard. It's all new to you, but we never know what may come to us. Now, take me — Tom Platt — *I'd* never ha' thought —"

"It's better than fourteen dollars a month an' a bullet in your belly," said Troop, from the wheel. "Ease your jumbo a grind."

"Dollars an' cents better," returned the man-o'-war's man, doing something to a big jib with a wooden spar tied to it. "But we didn't think o' that when we manned the windlass-brakes on the *Miss Jim Buck*,[1] outside Beaufort Harbor, with Fort Macon heavin' hot shot at our stern, an' a livin' gale atop of all. Where was you then, Disko?"

"Jest here, or hereabouts," Disko replied, "earnin' my bread on the deep waters, and dodgin' Reb privateers. 'Sorry I can't accommodate you with red-hot shot, Tom Platt; but I guess we'll come aout all right on wind 'fore we see Eastern Point."

There was an incessant slapping and chatter at the bows now, varied by a solid thud and a little spout of spray that clattered down on the fo'c'sle. The rigging dripped clammy drops, and the men lounged along the lee of the house — all save Uncle Salters, who sat stiffly on the main-hatch nursing his stung hands.

[1] The *Gemsbok*, U. S. N.?

"'Guess she'd carry stays'l," said Disko, rolling one eye at his brother.

"'Guess she wouldn't to any sorter profit. What's the sense o' wastin' canvas?" the farmer-sailor replied.

The wheel twitched almost imperceptibly in Disko's hands. A few seconds later a hissing wave-top slashed diagonally across the boat, smote Uncle Salters between the shoulders, and drenched him from head to foot. He rose sputtering, and went forward, only to catch another.

"See dad chase him all around the deck," said Dan. "Uncle Salters he thinks his quarter-share's our canvas. Dad's put this duckin' act up on him two trips runnin'. Hi! That found him where he feeds." Uncle Salters had taken refuge by the foremast, but a wave slapped him over the knees. Disko's face was as blank as the circle of the wheel.

"'Guess she'd lie easier under stays'l, Salters," said Disko, as though he had seen nothing.

"Set your old kite, then," roared the victim, through a cloud of spray; "only don't lay it to me if anything happens. Penn, you go below right off an' git your coffee. You ought to hev more sense than to bum araound on deck this weather."

"Now they'll swill coffee an' play checkers till the cows come home," said Dan, as Uncle Salters

hustled Penn into the fore-cabin. "'Looks to me like's if we'd all be doin' so fer a spell. There's nothin' in creation deader-limpsey-idler'n a Banker when she ain't on fish."

"I'm glad ye spoke, Danny," cried Long Jack, who had been casting round in search of amusement. "I'd clean forgot we'd a passenger under that T-wharf hat. There's no idleness for thim that don't know their ropes. Pass him along, Tom Platt, an' we'll l'arn him."

"'Tain't my trick this time," grinned Dan. "You've got to go it alone. Dad learned *me* with a rope's end."

For an hour Long Jack walked his prey up and down, teaching, as he said, "things at the sea that ivry man must know, blind, dhrunk, or asleep." There is not much gear to a seventy-ton schooner with a stump-foremast, but Long Jack had a gift of expression. When he wished to draw Harvey's attention to the peak-halyards, he dug his knuckles into the back of the boy's neck and kept him at gaze for half a minute. He emphasised the difference between fore and aft generally by rubbing Harvey's nose along a few feet of the boom, and the lead of each rope was fixed in Harvey's mind by the end of the rope itself.

The lesson would have been easier had the deck been at all free; but there appeared to be a

place on it for everything and anything except a man. Forward lay the windlass and its tackle, with the chain and hemp cables, all very unpleasant to trip over; the fo'c'sle stovepipe, and the gurry-butts by the fo'c'sle-hatch to hold the fish-livers. Aft of these the fore-boom and booby of the main-hatch took all the space that was not needed for the pumps and dressing-pens. Then came the nests of dories lashed to ring-bolts by the quarter-deck; the house, with tubs and oddments lashed all around it; and, last, the sixty-foot main-boom in its crutch, splitting things lengthwise, to duck and dodge under every time.

Tom Platt, of course, could not keep his oar out of the business, but ranged alongside with enormous and unnecessary descriptions of sails and spars on the old *Ohio*.

"Niver mind fwhat he says; attind to me, Innocince. Tom Platt, this bally-hoo's not the *Ohio*, an' you're mixing the bhoy bad."

"He'll be ruined for life, beginnin' on a fore-an'-after this way," Tom Platt pleaded. "Give him a chance to know a few leadin' principles. Sailin's an art, Harvey, as I'd show you if I had ye in the foretop o' the —"

"I know ut. Ye'd talk him dead an' cowld Silince, Tom Platt! Now, after all I've said, how'd you reef the foresail, Harve? Take your time answerin'."

"Haul that in," said Harvey, pointing to leeward.

"Fwhat? The North Atlantuc?"

"No, the boom. Then run that rope you showed me back there —"

"That's no way," Tom Platt burst in.

"Quiet! He's l'arnin', an' has not the names good yet. Go on, Harve."

"Oh, it's the reef-pennant. I'd hook the tackle on to the reef-pennant, and then let down —"

"Lower the sail, child! Lower!" said Tom Platt, in a professional agony.

"Lower the throat- and peak-halyards," Harvey went on. Those names stuck in his head.

"Lay your hand on thim," said Long Jack.

Harvey obeyed. "Lower till that rope-loop — on the after-leach — kris — no, it's cringle — till the cringle was down on the boom. Then I'd tie her up the way you said, and then I'd hoist up the peak- and throat-halyards again."

"You've forgot to pass the tack-earing, but wid time and help ye'll l'arn. There's good and just reason for ivry rope aboard, or else 'twould be overboard. D'ye follow me? 'Tis dollars an' cents I'm puttin' into your pocket, ye skinny little supercargo, so that fwhin ye've filled out ye can ship from Boston to Cuba an' tell thim Long Jack l'arned you. Now I'll chase ye around a piece, callin' the ropes, an' you'll lay your hand on thim as I call."

He began, and Harvey, who was feeling rather tired, walked slowly to the rope named. A rope's end licked round his ribs, and nearly knocked the breath out of him.

"When you own a boat," said Tom Platt, with severe eyes, "you can walk. Till then, take all orders at the run. Once more — to make sure!"

Harvey was in a glow with the exercise, and this last cut warmed him thoroughly. Now, he was a singularly smart boy, the son of a very clever man and a very sensitive woman, with a fine resolute temper that systematic spoiling had nearly turned to mulish obstinacy. He looked at the other men, and saw that even Dan did not smile. It was evidently all in the day's work, though it hurt abominably; so he swallowed the hint with a gulp and a gasp and a grin. The same smartness that led him to take such advantage of his mother made him very sure that no one on the boat, except, maybe, Penn, would stand the least nonsense. One learns a great deal from a mere tone. Long Jack called over half a dozen more ropes, and Harvey danced over the deck like an eel at ebb-tide, one eye on Tom Platt.

"Ver' good. Ver' good done," said Manuel. "After supper I show you a little schooner I make, with all her ropes. So we shall learn."

"Fust-class fer — a passenger," said Dan. "Dad ne's jest allowed you'll be wuth your salt maybe

'fore you're draownded. Thet's a heap fer dad. I'll learn you more our next watch together."

"Taller!" grunted Disko, peering through the fog as it smoked over the bows. There was nothing to be seen ten feet beyond the surging jib-boom, while alongside rolled the endless procession of solemn, pale waves whispering and lipping one to the other.

"Now I'll learn you something Long Jack can't," shouted Tom Platt, as from a locker by the stern he produced a battered deep-sea lead hollowed at one end, smeared the hollow from a saucer full of mutton tallow, and went forward. "I'll learn you how to fly the Blue Pigeon. Shooo!"

Disko did something to the wheel that checked the schooner's way, while Manuel, with Harvey to help (and a proud boy was Harvey), let down the jib in a lump on the boom. The lead sung a deep droning song as Tom Platt whirled it round and round.

"Go ahead, man," said Long Jack, impatiently. "We're not drawin' twenty-five fut off Fire Island in a fog. There's no trick to ut."

"Don't be jealous, Galway." The released lead plopped into the sea far ahead as the schooner surged slowly forward.

"Soundin' *is* a trick, though," said Dan, "when your dipsey lead's all the eye you're like to hev for a week. What d'you make it, dad?"

Disko's face relaxed. His skill and honour were involved in the march he had stolen on the rest of the fleet, and he had his reputation as a master artist who knew the Banks blindfold. "Sixty, mebbe — ef I'm any judge," he replied, with a glance at the tiny compass in the window of the house.

"Sixty," sung out Tom Platt, hauling in great wet coils.

The schooner gathered way once more. "Heave!" said Disko, after a quarter of an hour.

"What d'you make it?" Dan whispered, and he looked at Harvey proudly. But Harvey was too proud of his own performances to be impressed just then.

"Fifty," said the father. "I mistrust we're right over the nick o' Green Bank on old Sixty-Fifty."

"Fifty!" roared Tom Platt. They could scarcely see him through the fog. "She's bu'st within a yard — like the shells at Fort Maçon."

"Bait up, Harve," said Dan, diving for a line on the reel.

The schooner seemed to be straying promiscuously through the smother, her head-sail banging wildly. The men waited and looked at the boys, who began fishing.

"Heugh!" Dan's lines twitched on the scored and scarred rail. "Now haow in thunder did dad

know? Help us here, Harve. It's a big un. Poke-hooked, too." They hauled together, and landed a goggle-eyed twenty-pound cod. He had taken the bait right into his stomach.

"Why, he's all covered with little crabs," cried Harvey, turning him over.

"By the great hook-block, they're lousy already," said Long Jack. "Disko, ye kape your spare eyes under the keel."

Splash went the anchor, and they all heaved over the lines, each man taking his own place at the bulwarks.

"Are they good to eat?" Harvey panted, as he lugged in another crab-covered cod.

"Sure. When they're lousy it's a sign they've all been herdin' together by the thousand, and when they take the bait that way they're hungry. Never mind how the bait sets. They'll bite on the bare hook."

"Say, this is great!" Harvey cried, as the fish came in gasping and splashing — nearly all poke-hooked, as Dan had said. "Why can't we always fish from the boat instead of from the dories?"

"Allus can, till we begin to dress-daown. Efter thet, the heads and offals 'u'd scare the fish to Fundy. Boat-fishin' ain't reckoned progressive, though, unless ye know as much as dad knows. Guess we'll run aout aour trawl to-night. Harder on the back, this, than frum the dory, ain't it?"

It was rather back-breaking work, for in a dory the weight of a cod is water-borne till the last minute, and you are, so to speak, abreast of him; but the few feet of a schooner's free-board make so much extra dead-hauling, and stooping over the bulwarks cramps the stomach. But it was wild and furious sport so long as it lasted; and a big pile lay aboard when the fish ceased biting.

"Where's Penn and Uncle Salters?" Harvey asked, slapping the slime off his oilskins, and reeling up the line in careful imitation of the others.

"Git's coffee and see."

Under the yellow glare of the lamp on the pawl-post, the fo'c'sle table down and opened, utterly unconscious of fish or weather, sat the two men, a checker-board between them, Uncle Salters snarling at Penn's every move.

"What's the matter naow?" said the former, as Harvey, one hand in the leather loop at the head of the ladder, hung shouting to the cook.

"Big fish and lousy—heaps and heaps," Harvey replied, quoting Long Jack. "How's the game?"

Little Penn's jaw dropped. "'Tweren't none o' his fault," snapped Uncle Salters. "Penn's deef."

"Checkers, weren't it?" said Dan, as Harvey staggered aft with the steaming coffee in a tin pail. "That lets us out o' cleanin' up to-night. Dad's a jest man. They'll have to do it."

"An' two young fellers I know'll bait up a tub or so o' trawl, while they're cleanin'," said Disko, lashing the wheel to his taste.

"Um! 'Guess I'd ruther clean up, dad."

"Don't doubt it. Ye wun't, though. Dress-daown! Dress-daown! Penn'll pitch while you two bait up."

"Why in thunder didn't them blame boys tell us you'd struck on?" said Uncle Salters, shuffling to his place at the table. "This knife's gum-blunt, Dan."

"Ef stickin' out cable don't wake ye, guess you'd better hire a boy o' your own," said Dan, muddling about in the dusk over the tubs full of trawl-line lashed to windward of the house. "Oh, Harve, don't ye want to slip down an' git's bait?"

"Bait ez we are," said Disko. "I mistrust shag-fishin' will pay better, ez things go."

That meant the boys would bait with selected offal of the cod as the fish were cleaned — an improvement on paddling barehanded in the little bait-barrels below. The tubs were full of neatly coiled line carrying a big hook each few feet; and the testing and baiting of every single hook, with the stowage of the baited line so that it should run clear when shot from the dory, was a scientific business. Dan managed it in the dark without looking, while Harvey caught his fingers on the barbs and bewailed his fate. But the

hooks flew through Dan's fingers like tatting on an old maid's lap. "I helped bait up trawl ashore 'fore I could well walk," he said. "But it's a putterin' job all the same. Oh, dad!" This shouted towards the hatch, where Disko and Tom Platt were salting. "How many skates you reckon we'll need?"

"'Baout three. Hurry!"

"There's three hundred fathom to each tub," Dan explained; "more'n enough to lay out tonight. Ouch! 'Slipped up there, I did." He stuck his finger in his mouth. "I tell you, Harve, there ain't money in Gloucester'u'd hire me to ship on a reg'lar trawler. It may be progressive, but, barrin' that, it's the putterin'est, slimjammest business top of earth."

"I don't know what this is, if 'tisn't regular trawling," said Harvey, sulkily. "My fingers are all cut to frazzles."

"Pshaw! This is jest one o' dad's blame experiments. He don't trawl 'less there's mighty good reason fer it. Dad knows. Thet's why he's baitin' ez he is. We'll hev her saggin' full when we take her up er we won't see a fin."

Penn and Uncle Salters cleaned up as Disko had ordained, but the boys profited little. No sooner were the tubs furnished than Tom Platt and Long Jack, who had been exploring the inside of a dory with a lantern, snatched them

away, loaded up the tubs and some small, painted trawl-buoys, and hove the boat overboard into what Harvey regarded as an exceedingly rough sea. "They'll be drowned. Why, the dory's loaded like a freight-car," he cried.

"We'll be back," said Long Jack, "an' in case you'll not be lookin' for us, we'll lay into you both if the trawl's snarled."

The dory surged up on the crest of a wave, and just when it seemed impossible that she could avoid smashing against the schooner's side, slid over the ridge, and was swallowed up in the damp dusk.

"Take a-hold here, an' keep ringin' steady," said Dan, passing Harvey the lanyard of a bell that hung just behind the windlass.

Harvey rang lustily, for he felt two lives depended on him. But Disko in the cabin, scrawling in the log-book, did not look like a murderer, and when he went to supper he even smiled drily at the anxious Harvey.

"*This* ain't no weather," said Dan. "Why, you an' me could set thet trawl! They've only gone out jest far 'nough so's not to foul our cable. They don't need no bell reelly."

"Clang! cling! clang!" Harvey kept it up, varied with occasional rub-a-dubs, for another half-hour. There was a bellow and a bump alongside. Manuel and Dan raced to the hooks of the dory-

tackle; Long Jack and Tom Platt arrived on deck together, it seemed, one half the North Atlantic at their backs, and the dory followed them in the air, landing with a clatter.

"Nary snarl," said Tom Platt, as he dripped. "Danny, you'll do yet."

"The pleasure av your comp'ny to the banquit," said Long Jack, squelching the water from his boots as he capered like an elephant and stuck an oilskinned arm into Harvey's face. "We do be condescending to honour the second half wid our presence." And off they all four rolled to supper, where Harvey stuffed himself to the brim on fish-chowder and fried pies, and fell fast asleep just as Manuel produced from a locker a lovely two-foot model of the *Lucy Holmes*, his first boat, and was going to show Harvey the ropes. Harvey never even twiddled his fingers as Penn pushed him into his bunk.

"It must be a sad thing — a very sad thing," said Penn, watching the boy's face, "for his mother and his father, who think he is dead. To lose a child — to lose a man-child!"

"Git out o' this, Penn," said Dan. "Go aft and finish your game with Uncle Salters. Tell dad I'll stand Harve's watch ef he don't keer. He's played aout."

"Ver' good boy," said Manuel, slipping out of his boots and disappearing into the black shadows

of the lower bunk. "Expec' he make good man, Danny. I no see he is any so mad as your parpa he says. Eh, wha-at?"

Dan chuckled, but the chuckle ended in a snore.

It was thick weather outside, with a rising wind, and the elder men stretched their watches. The hours struck clear in the cabin; the nosing bows slapped and scuffled with the seas; the fo'c'sle stovepipe hissed and sputtered as the spray caught it; and the boys slept on, while Disko, Long Jack, Tom Platt, and Uncle Salters, each in turn, stumped aft to look at the wheel, forward to see that the anchor held, or to veer out a little more cable against chafing, with a glance at the dim anchor-light between each round.

CHAPTER IV

HARVEY waked to find the "first half" at breakfast, the fo'c'sle door drawn to a crack, and every square inch of the schooner singing its own tune. The black bulk of the cook balanced behind the tiny galley over the glare of the stove, and the pots and pans in the pierced wooden board before it jarred and racketed to each plunge. Up and up the fo'c'sle climbed, yearning and surging and quivering, and then, with a clear, sickle-like swoop, came down into the seas. He could hear the flaring bows cut and squelch, and there was a pause ere the divided waters came down on the deck above, like a volley of buck-shot. Followed the woolly sound of the cable in the hawse-hole; a grunt and squeal of the windlass; a yaw, a punt, and a kick, and the *We're Here* gathered herself together to repeat the motions.

"Now, ashore," he heard Long Jack saying, "ye've chores, an' ye must do thim in any weather. Here we're well clear of the fleet, an' we've no chores — an' that's a blessin'. Good night, all." He passed like a big snake from the table to his

bunk, and began to smoke. Tom Platt followed his example; Uncle Salters, with Penn, fought his way up the ladder to stand his watch, and the cook set for the "second half."

It came out of its bunks as the others had entered theirs, with a shake and a yawn. It ate till it could eat no more; and then Manuel filled his pipe with some terrible tobacco, crotched himself between the pawl-post and a forward bunk, cocked his feet up on the table, and smiled tender and indolent smiles at the smoke. Dan lay at length in his bunk, wrestling with a gaudy, gilt-stopped accordion, whose tunes went up and down with the pitching of the *We're Here*. The cook, his shoulders against the locker where he kept the fried pies (Dan was fond of fried pies), peeled potatoes, with one eye on the stove in event of too much water finding its way down the pipe; and the general smell and smother were past all description.

Harvey considered affairs, wondered that he was not deathly sick, and crawled into his bunk again, as the softest and safest place, while Dan struck up, "I don't want to play in your yard," as accurately as the wild jerks allowed.

"How long is this for?" Harvey asked of Manuel.

"Till she get a little quiet, and we can row to trawl. Perhaps to-night. Perhaps two days more. You do not like? Eh, wha-at?"

"I should have been crazy sick a week ago, but it doesn't seem to upset me now — much."

"That is because we make you fisherman, these days. If I was you, when I come to Gloucester I would give two, three big candles for my good luck."

"Give who?"

"To be sure — the Virgin of our Church on the Hill. She is very good to fishermen all the time. That is why so few of us Portugee men ever are drowned."

"You're a Roman Catholic, then?"

"I am a Madeira man. I am not a Porto Pico boy. Shall I be Baptist, then? Eh, wha-at? I always give candles — two, three more when I come to Gloucester. The good Virgin she never forgets me, Manuel."

"I don't sense it that way," Tom Platt put in from his bunk, his scarred face lit up by the glare of a match as he sucked at his pipe. "It stands to reason the sea's the sea; and you'll git jest about what's goin', candles or kerosene, fer that matter."

"'Tis a mighty good thing," said Long Jack, "to have a fri'nd at coort, though. I'm o' Manuel's way o' thinkin'. About tin years back I was crew to a Sou' Boston market-boat. We was off Minot's Ledge wid a northeaster, butt first,

atop of us, thicker'n burgoo. The ould man was dhrunk, his chin waggin' on the tiller, an' I sez to myself, 'If iver I stick my boat-huk into T-wharf again, I'll show the saints fwhat manner o' craft they saved me out av.' Now, I'm here, as ye can well see, an' the model of the dhirty ould *Kathleen*, that took me a month to make, I gave ut to the priest, an' he hung ut up forninst the altar. There's more sense in givin' a model that's by way o' bein' a work av art than any candle. Ye can buy candles at store, but a model shows the good saints ye've tuk trouble an' are grateful."

"D'you believe that, Irish?" said Tom Platt, turning on his elbow.

"Would I do ut if I did not, Ohio?"

"Wa-al, Enoch Fuller he made a model o' the old *Ohio*, and she's to Salem museum now. Mighty pretty model, too, but I guess Enoch he never done it fer no sacrifice; an' the way I take it is—"

There were the makings of an hour-long discussion of the kind that fishermen love, where the talk runs in shouting circles and no one proves anything at the end, had not Dan struck up this cheerful rhyme:

> "Up jumped the mackerel with his striped back,
> Reef in the mainsail, and haul on the tack;
> *For* it's windy weather—"

Here Long Jack joined in:

"*And* it's blowy weather;
When the winds begin to blow, pipe all hands together!"

Dan went on, with a cautious look at Tom Platt, holding the accordion low in the bunk:

"Up jumped the cod with his chuckle-head,
Went to the main-chains to heave at the lead;
For it's windy weather," etc.

Tom Platt seemed to be hunting for something. Dan crouched lower, but sang louder:

"Up jumped the flounder that swims to the ground.
Chuckle-head! Chuckle-head! Mind where ye sound!"

Tom Platt's huge rubber boot whirled across the fo'c'sle and caught Dan's uplifted arm. There was war between the man and the boy ever since Dan had discovered that the mere whistling of that tune would make him angry as he heaved the lead.

"'Thought I'd fetch yer," said Dan, returning the gift with precision. "Ef you don't like my music, git out your fiddle. I ain't goin' to lie here all day an' listen to you an' Long Jack arguin' 'baout candles. Fiddle, Tom Platt; or I'll learn Harve here the tune!"

Tom Platt leaned down to a locker and brought up an old white fiddle. Manuel's eye

glistened, and from somewhere behind the pawl-post he drew out a tiny, guitar-like thing with wire strings, which he called a *nachette*.

"'Tis a concert," said Long Jack, beaming through the smoke. "A reg'lar Boston concert."

There was a burst of spray as the hatch opened, and Disko, in yellow oilskins, descended.

"Ye're just in time, Disko. Fwhat's she doin' outside?"

"Jest this!" He dropped on to the lockers with the push and heave of the *We're Here*.

"We're singin' to kape our breakfasts down. Ye'll lead, av course, Disko," said Long Jack.

"'Guess there ain't more'n 'baout two old songs I know, an' ye've heerd them both."

His excuses were cut short by Tom Platt launching into a most dolorous tune, like unto the moaning of winds and the creaking of masts. With his eyes fixed on the beams above, Disko began this ancient, ancient ditty, Tom Platt flourishing all round him to make the tune and words fit a little:

"There is a crack packet—crack packet o' fame,
She hails from Noo York, an' the *Dreadnought*'s her name.
You may talk o' your fliers — Swallow-tail and Black Ball —
But the *Dreadnought*'s the packet that can beat them all.

"Now the *Dreadnought* she lies in the River Mersey,
Because of the tugboat to take her to sea;
But when she's off soundings you shortly will know

(*Chorus.*)

She's the Liverpool packet — O Lord, let her go!

"Now the *Dreadnought* she's howlin' 'crost the Banks o' Newfoundland,
Where the water's all shallow and the bottom's all sand.
Sez all the little fishes that swim to an' fro:

(*Chorus.*)

'She's the Liverpool packet — O Lord, let her go!'"

There were scores of verses, for he worked the *Dreadnought* every mile of the way between Liverpool and New York as conscientiously as though he were on her deck, and the accordion pumped and the fiddle squeaked beside him. Tom Platt followed with something about "the rough and tough McGinn, who would pilot the vessel in." Then they called on Harvey, who felt very flattered, to contribute to the entertainment; but all that he could remember were some pieces of "Skipper Ireson's Ride" that he had been taught at the camp-school in the Adirondacks. It seemed that they might be appropriate to the time and place, but he had no more than mentioned the title when Disko brought down one foot with a bang, and cried, "Don't go on, young feller. That's a mistaken jedgment — one o' the worst kind, too, becaze it's catchin' to the ear."

"I orter ha' warned you," said Dan. "Thet allus fetches dad."

"What's wrong?" said Harvey, surprised and a little angry.

"All you're goin' to say," said Disko. "All dead wrong from start to finish, an' Whittier he's to blame. I have no special call to right any Marblehead man, but 'tweren't no fault o' Ireson's. My father he told me the tale time an' again, an' this is the way 'twuz."

"For the wan hundreth time," put in Long Jack, under his breath.

"Ben Ireson he was skipper o' the *Betty*, young feller, comin' home frum the Banks — that was before the war of 1812, but jestice is jestice at all times. They f'und the *Active* o' Portland, an' Gibbons o' that town he was her skipper; they f'und her leakin' off Cape Cod Light. There was a terr'ble gale on, an' they was gettin' the *Betty* home's fast as they could craowd her. Well, Ireson he said there warn't any sense to reskin' a boat in that sea; the men they wouldn't hev it; and he laid it before them to stay by the *Active* till the sea run daown a piece. They wouldn't hev that either, hangin' araound the Cape in any sech weather, leak or no leak. They jest up stays'l an' quit, nat'rally takin' Ireson with 'em. Folks to Marblehead was mad at him not runnin' the risk, and becaze nex' day, when the sea was ca'am (they never stopped to think o' *that*), some of the *Active's* folk was took off by a Truro man.

They come into Marblehead with their own tale to tell, sayin' how Ireson had shamed his town, an' so forth an' so on; an' Ireson's men they was scared, seein' public feelin' ag'in' 'em, an' they went back on Ireson, an' swore he was respons'ble for the hull act. 'Tweren't the women neither that tarred and feathered him — Marblehead women don't act that way — 'twas a passel o' men an' boys, an' they carted him araound town in an old dory till the bottom fell aout, an' Ireson he told 'em they'd be sorry for it some day. Well, the facts came aout later, same's they usually do, too late to be any ways useful to an honest man; an' Whittier he come along an' picked up the slack eend of a lyin' tale, an' tarred and feathered Ben Ireson all over onct more after he was dead. 'Twas the only time Whittier ever slipped up, an' 'tweren't fair. I whaled Dan good when he brought that piece back from school. *You* don't know no better, o' course; but I've give you the facts, hereafter an' evermore to be remembered. Ben Ireson weren't no sech kind o' man as Whittier makes aout; my father he knew him well, before an' after that business, an' you beware o' hasty jedgments, young feller. Next!"

Harvey had never heard Disko talk so long, and collapsed with burning cheeks; but, as Dan said promptly, a boy could only learn what he

was taught at school, and life was too short to keep track of every lie along the coast.

Then Manuel touched the jangling, jarring little *nachette* to a queer tune, and sang something in Portuguese about "*Nina, innocente!*" ending with a full-handed sweep that brought the song up with a jerk. Then Disko obliged with his second song, to an old-fashioned creaky tune, and all joined in the chorus. This is one stanza:

"Now Aprile is over and melted the snow,
And outer Noo Bedford we shortly must tow;
Yes, out o' Noo Bedford we shortly must clear,
We're the whalers that never see wheat in the ear."

Here the fiddle went very softly for a while by itself, and then:

"Wheat-in-the-ear, my true-love's posy blowin';
Wheat-in-the-ear, we're goin' off to sea;
Wheat-in-the-ear, I left you fit for sowin';
When I come back a loaf o' bread you'll be!"

That made Harvey almost weep, though he could not tell why. But it was much worse when the cook dropped the potatoes and held out his hands for the fiddle. Still leaning against the locker door, he struck into a tune that was like something very bad but sure to happen whatever you did. After a little he sang in an unknown tongue, his big chin down on the fiddle-tail, his

white eyeballs glaring in the lamplight. Harvey swung out of his bunk to hear better; and amid the straining of the timbers and the wash of the waters the tune crooned and moaned on, like lee surf in a blind fog, till it ended with a wail.

"Jiminy Christmas! Thet gives me the blue creevles," said Dan. "What in thunder is it?"

"The song of Fin McCoul," said the cook, "when he wass going to Norway." His English was not thick, but all clear-cut, as though it came from a phonograph.

"Faith, I've been to Norway, but I didn't make that unwholesim noise. 'Tis like some of the old songs, though," said Long Jack, sighing.

"Don't let's hev another 'thout somethin' between," said Dan; and the accordion struck up a rattling, catchy tune that ended:

"It's six an' twenty Sundays sence las' we saw the land,
With fifteen hunder quintal,
An' fifteen hunder quintal,
'Teen hunder toppin' quintal,
'Twix' old 'Queereau an' Grand!"

"Hold on!" roared Tom Platt. "D'ye want to nail the trip, Dan? That's Jonah sure, 'less you sing it after all our salt's wet."

"No, 'tain't. Is it, dad? Not unless you sing the very las' verse. You can't learn *me* anything on Jonahs!"

The Song of Fin McCoul

"What's that?" said Harvey. "What's a Jonah?"

"A Jonah's anything that spoils the luck. Sometimes it's a man — sometimes it's a boy — or a bucket. I've known a splittin'-knife Jonah two trips till we was on to her," said Tom Platt. "There's all sorts o' Jonahs. Jim Bourke was one till he was drowned on Georges. I'd never ship with Jim Bourke, not if I was starvin'. There wuz a green dory on the *Ezra Flood*. Thet was a Jonah too, the worst sort o' Jonah. Drowned four men she did, an' used to shine fiery o' nights in the nest."

"And you believe that?" said Harvey, remembering what Tom Platt had said about candles and models. "Haven't we all got to take what's served?"

A mutter of dissent ran round the bunks. "Outboard, yes; inboard, things can happen," said Disko. "Don't you go makin' a mock of Jonahs, young feller."

"Well, Harve ain't no Jonah. Day after we catched him," Dan cut in, "we had a toppin' good catch."

The cook threw up his head and laughed suddenly — a queer, thin laugh. He was a most disconcerting nigger.

"Murder!" said Long Jack. "Don't do that again, doctor. We ain't used to ut."

"What's wrong?" said Dan. "Ain't he our

mascot, and didn't they strike on good after we'd struck him?"

"Oh! yess," said the cook. "I know that, but the catch iss not finish yet."

"He ain't goin' to do us any harm," said Dan, hotly. "Where are ye hintin' an' edgin' to? *He's* all right."

"No harm. No. But one day he will be your master, Danny."

"That all?" said Dan, placidly. "He wun't — not by a jugful."

"Master!" said the cook, pointing to Harvey. "Man!" and he pointed to Dan.

"That's news. Haow soon?" said Dan, with a laugh.

"In some years, and I shall see it. Master and man — man and master."

"How in thunder d'ye work that out?" said Tom Platt.

"In my head, where I can see."

"Haow?" This from all the others at once.

"I do not know, but so it will be." He dropped his head, and went on peeling the potatoes, and not another word could they get out of him.

"Well," said Dan, "a heap o' things'll hev to come abaout 'fore Harve's any master o' mine; but I'm glad the doctor ain't choosen to mark him for a Jonah. Now, I mistrust Uncle Salters fer

the Jonerest Jonah in the fleet regardin' his own special luck. Dunno ef it's spreadin' same's smallpox. He ought to be on the *Carrie Pitman.* That boat's her own Jonah, sure — crews an' gear make no differ to her driftin'. Jiminy Christmas! She'll etch loose in a flat ca'am."

"We're well clear o' the fleet, anyway," said Disko, "*Carrie Pitman* an' all." There was a rapping on the deck.

"Uncle Salters has catched his luck," said Dan, as his father departed.

"It's blown clear," Disko cried, and all the fo'c'sle tumbled up for a bit of fresh air. The fog had gone, but a sullen sea ran in great rollers behind it. The *We're Here* slid, as it were, into long, sunk avenues and ditches which felt quite sheltered and homelike if they would only stay still; but they changed without rest or mercy, and flung up the schooner to crown one peak of a thousand grey hills, while the wind hooted through her rigging as she zigzagged down the slopes. Far away a sea would burst in a sheet of foam, and the others would follow suit as at a signal, till Harvey's eyes swam with the vision of interlacing whites and greys. Four or five Mother Carey's chickens stormed round in circles, shrieking as they swept past the bows. A rain-squall or two strayed aimlessly over the hopeless waste, ran down wind and back again, and melted away.

"'Seems to me I saw somethin' flicker jest naow over yonder," said Uncle Salters, pointing to the northeast.

"Can't be any of the fleet," said Disko, peering under his eyebrows, a hand on the fo'c'sle gangway as the solid bows hatcheted into the troughs. "Sea's oilin' over dretful fast. Danny, don't you want to skip up a piece an' see how aour trawl-buoy lays?"

Danny, in his big boots, trotted rather than climbed up the main rigging (this consumed Harvey with envy), hitched himself around the reeling crosstrees, and let his eye rove till it caught the tiny black buoy-flag on the shoulder of a mile-away swell.

"She's all right," he hailed. "Sail O! Dead to the no'th'ard, comin' down like smoke! Schooner she be, too."

They waited yet another half-hour, the sky clearing in patches, with a flicker of sickly sun from time to time that made patches of olive-green water. Then a stump-foremast lifted, ducked, and disappeared, to be followed on the next wave by a high stern with old-fashioned wooden snail's-horn davits. The sails were red-tanned.

"Frenchmen!" shouted Dan. "No, 'tain't, neither. Da-ad!"

"That's no French," said Disko. "Salters,

your blame luck holds tighter'n a screw in a keg-head."

"I've eyes. It's Uncle Abishai."

"You can't nowise tell fer sure."

"The head-king of all Jonahs," groaned Tom Platt. "Oh, Salters, Salters, why wasn't you abed an' asleep?"

"How could I tell?" said poor Salters, as the schooner swung up.

She might have been the very *Flying Dutchman*, so foul, draggled, and unkempt was every rope and stick aboard. Her old-style quarter-deck was some four or five feet high, and her rigging flew knotted and tangled like weed at a wharf-end. She was running before the wind — yawing frightfully — her staysail let down to act as a sort of extra foresail,— "scandalised," they call it,— and her fore-boom guyed out over the side. Her bowsprit cocked up like an old-fashioned frigate's; her jib-boom had been fished and spliced and nailed and clamped beyond further repair; and as she hove herself forward, and sat down on her broad tail, she looked for all the world like a blowzy, frousy, bad old woman sneering at a decent girl.

"That's Abishai," said Salters. "Full o' gin an' Judique men, an' the judgments o' Providence layin' fer him an' never takin' good holt. He's run in to bait, Miquelon way."

"He'll run her under," said Long Jack. "That's no rig fer this weather."

"Not he, 'r he'd 'a' done it long ago," Disko replied. "Looks's if he cal'lated to run *us* under. Ain't she daown by the head more'n natural, Tom Platt?"

"Ef it's his style o' loadin' her she ain't safe," said the sailor, slowly. "Ef she's spewed her oakum he'd better git to his pumps mighty quick."

The creature thrashed up, wore round with a clatter and rattle, and lay head to wind within ear-shot.

A greybeard wagged over the bulwark, and a thick voice yelled something Harvey could not understand. But Disko's face darkened. "He'd resk every stick he hez to carry bad news. Says we're in fer a shift o' wind. He's in fer worse. Abishai! Abi*shai!*" He waved his arm up and down with the gesture of a man at the pumps, and pointed forward. The crew mocked him and laughed.

"Jounce ye, an' strip ye, an' trip ye!" yelled Uncle Abishai. "A livin' gale — a livin' gale. Yah! Cast up fer your last trip, all you Gloucester haddocks. *You* won't see Gloucester no more, no more!"

"Crazy full — as usual," said Tom Platt. "'Wish he hadn't spied us, though."

She drifted out of hearing while the greyhead yelled something about a dance at the Bay of Bulls and a dead man in the fo'c'sle. Harvey shuddered. He had seen the sloven tilled decks and the savage-eyed crew.

"An' that's a fine little floatin' hell fer her draught," said Long Jack. "I wondher what mischief he's been at ashore."

"He's a trawler," Dan explained to Harvey, "an' he runs in fer bait all along the coast. Oh, no, not home, he don't go. He deals along the south an' east shore up yonder." He nodded in the direction of the pitiless Newfoundland beaches. "Dad won't never take me ashore there. They're a mighty tough crowd — an' Abishai's the toughest. You saw his boat? Well, she's nigh seventy year old, they say; the last o' the old Marblehead heel-tappers. They don't make them quarter-decks any more. Abishai don't use Marblehead, though. He ain't wanted there. He jes' drif's araound, in debt, trawlin' an' cussin' like you've heard. Bin a Jonah fer years an' years, he hez. 'Gits liquor frum the Feecamp boats fer makin' spells an' selling winds an' such truck. Crazy, I guess."

"'Twon't be any use underrunnin' the trawl to-night," said Tom Platt, with quiet despair. "He come alongside special to cuss us. I'd give my wage an' share to see him at the gangway o'

the old *Ohio* 'fore we quit floggin'. Jest abaout six dozen, an' Sam Mocatta layin' 'em on criss-cross!"

The dishevelled "heel-tapper" danced drunkenly down wind, and all eyes followed her. Suddenly the cook cried in his phonograph voice: "It wass his own death made him speak so! He iss fey—fey, I tell you! Look!" She sailed into a patch of watery sunshine three or four miles distant. The patch dulled and faded out, and even as the light passed so did the schooner. She dropped into a hollow and — was not.

"Run under, by the great hook-block!" shouted Disko, jumping aft. "Drunk or sober, we've got to help 'em. Heave short and break her out! Smart!"

Harvey was thrown on the deck by the shock that followed the setting of the jib and foresail, for they hove short on the cable, and to save time, jerked the anchor bodily from the bottom, heaving in as they moved away. This is a bit of brute force seldom resorted to except in matters of life and death, and the little *We're Here* complained like a human. They ran down to where Abishai's craft had vanished; found two or three trawl-tubs, a gin-bottle, and a stove-in dory, but nothing more. "Let 'em go," said Disko, though no one had hinted at picking them up. "I wouldn't hev a match that belonged to Abishai

aboard. 'Guess she run clear under. 'Must ha' been spewin' her oakum fer a week, an' they never thought to pump her. That's one more boat gone along o' leavin' port all hands drunk."

"Glory be!" said Long Jack. "We'd ha' been obliged to help 'em if they was top o' water."

"'Thinkin' o' that myself," said Tom Platt.

"Fey! Fey!" said the cook, rolling his eyes. "He hass taken his own luck with him."

"Ver' good thing, I think, to tell the fleet when we see. Eh, wha-at?" said Manuel. "If you runna that way before the wind, and she work open her seams —" He threw out his hands with an indescribable gesture, while Penn sat down on the house and sobbed at the sheer horror and pity of it all. Harvey could not realise that he had seen death on the open waters, but he felt very sick.

Then Dan went up the crosstrees, and Disko steered them back to within sight of their own trawl-buoys just before the fog blanketed the sea once again.

"We go mighty quick hereabouts when we do go," was all he said to Harvey. "You think on that fer a spell, young feller. That was liquor."

After dinner it was calm enough to fish from the decks,— Penn and Uncle Salters were very zealous this time,— and the catch was large and large fish.

"Abishai has shorely took his luck with him," said Salters. "The wind hain't backed ner riz ner nothin'. How abaout the trawl? I despise superstition, anyway."

Tom Platt insisted that they had much better haul the thing and make a new berth. But the cook said: "The luck iss in two pieces. You will find it so when you look. *I* know." This so tickled Long Jack that he overbore Tom Platt, and the two went out together.

Underrunning a trawl means pulling it in on one side of the dory, picking off the fish, rebaiting the hooks, and passing them back to the sea again — something like pinning and unpinning linen on a wash-line. It is a lengthy business and rather dangerous, for the long, sagging line may twitch a boat under in a flash. But when they heard, "And naow to thee, O Capting," booming out of the fog, the crew of the *We're Here* took heart. The dory swirled alongside well loaded, Tom Platt yelling for Manuel to act as relief-boat.

"The luck's cut square in two pieces," said Long Jack, forking in the fish, while Harvey stood open-mouthed at the skill with which the plunging dory was saved from destruction. "One half was jest punkins. Tom Platt wanted to haul her an' ha' done wid ut; but I said, 'I'll back the doctor that has the second sight,' an' the other half come up sagging full o' big uns. Hurry, Man'nle,

an' bring's a tub o' bait. There's luck afloat to-night."

The fish bit at the newly baited hooks from which their brethren had just been taken, and Tom Platt and Long Jack moved methodically up and down the length of the trawl, the boat's nose surging under the wet line of hooks, stripping the sea-cucumbers that they called pumpkins, slatting off the fresh-caught cod against the gunwale, rebaiting, and loading Manuel's dory till dusk.

"I'll take no risks," said Disko, then —"not with him floatin' around so near. Abishai won't sink fer a week. Heave in the dories, an' we'll dress-daown after supper."

That was a mighty dressing-down, attended by three or four blowing grampuses. It lasted till nine o'clock, and Disko was thrice heard to chuckle as Harvey pitched the split fish into the hold.

"Say, you're haulin' ahead dretful fast," said Dan, when they ground the knives after the men had turned in. "There's somethin' of a sea to-night, an' I hain't heard you make no remarks on it."

"Too busy," Harvey replied, testing a blade's edge. "Come to think of it, she *is* a high-kicker."

The little schooner was gambolling all around her anchor among the silver-tipped waves. Backing with a start of affected surprise at the sight of the strained cable, she pounced on it like a kitten,

while the spray of her descent burst through the hawse-holes with the report of a gun. Shaking her head, she would say: "Well, I'm sorry I can't stay any longer with you. I'm going North," and would sidle off, halting suddenly with a dramatic rattle of her rigging. "As I was just going to observe," she would begin, as gravely as a drunken man addressing a lamp-post. The rest of the sentence (she acted her words in dumb-show, of course) was lost in a fit of the fidgets, when she behaved like a puppy chewing a string, a clumsy woman in a side-saddle, a hen with her head cut off, or a cow stung by a hornet, exactly as the whims of the sea took her.

"See her sayin' her piece. She's Patrick Henry naow," said Dan.

She swung sideways on a roller, and gesticulated with her jib-boom from port to starboard.

"But—ez—fer—me, give me liberty—er give me—death!"

Wop! She sat down in the moon-path on the water, courtesying with a flourish of pride impressive enough had not the wheel-gear sniggered mockingly in its box.

Harvey laughed aloud. "Why, it's just as if she was alive," he said.

"She's as stiddy as a haouse an' as dry as a herrin'," said Dan, enthusiastically, as he was slung across the deck in a batter of spray. "Fends

'em off an 'fends 'em off, an' 'Don't ye come anigh me,' she sez. Look at her — jest look at her! Sakes! You should see one o' them toothpicks h'istin' up her anchor on her spike outer fifteen-fathom water."

"What's a toothpick, Dan?"

"Them new haddockers an' herrin'-boats. Fine's a yacht forward, with yacht sterns to 'em, an' spike bowsprits, an' a haouse that u'd take our hold. I've heard that Burgess himself he made the models fer three or four of 'em, Dad's sot ag'in' 'em on account o' their pitchin' an' joltin', but there's heaps o' money in 'em. Dad can find fish, but he ain't no ways progressive — he don't go with the march o' the times. They're chock-full o' labour-savin' jigs an' sech all. 'Ever seed the *Elector* o' Gloucester? She's a daisy, ef she is a toothpick."

"What do they cost, Dan?"

"Hills o' dollars. Fifteen thousand, p'haps; more, mebbe. There's gold-leaf an' everything you kin think of." Then to himself, half under his breath: "Guess I'd call her *Hattie S.*, too."

CHAPTER V

That was the first of many talks with Dan, who told Harvey why he would transfer his dory's name to the imaginary Burgess-modelled haddocker. Harvey heard a good deal about the real Hattie at Gloucester; saw a lock of her hair—which Dan, finding fair words of no avail, had "hooked" as she sat in front of him at school that winter — and a photograph. Hattie was about fourteen years old, with an awful contempt for boys, and had been trampling on Dan's heart through the winter. All this was revealed under oath of solemn secrecy on moonlit decks, in the dead dark, or in choking fog; the whining wheel behind them, the climbing deck before, and without, the unresting, clamorous sea. Once, of course, as the boys came to know each other, there was a fight, which raged from bow to stern till Penn came up and separated them, but promised not to tell Disko, who thought fighting on watch rather worse than sleeping. Harvey was no match for Dan physically, but it says a great deal for his new training that he took his defeat

and did not try to get even with his conqueror by underhand methods.

That was after he had been cured of a string of boils between his elbows and wrists, where the wet jersey and oilskins cut into the flesh. The salt water stung them unpleasantly, but when they were ripe Dan treated them with Disko's razor, and assured Harvey that now he was a "blooded Banker"; the affliction of gurry-sores being the mark of the caste that claimed him.

Since he was a boy and very busy, he did not bother his head with too much thinking. He was exceedingly sorry for his mother, and often longed to see her and above all to tell her of his wonderful new life, and how brilliantly he was acquitting himself in it. Otherwise he preferred not to wonder too much how she was bearing the shock of his supposed death. But one day, as he stood on the fo'c'sle ladder, guying the cook, who had accused him and Dan of hooking fried pies, it occurred to him that this was a vast improvement on being snubbed by strangers in the smoking-room of a hired liner.

He was a recognised part of the scheme of things on the *We're Here;* had his place at the table and among the bunks; and could hold his own in the long talks on stormy days, when the others were always ready to listen to what they called his "fairy-tales" of his life ashore. It did not

take him more than two days and a quarter to feel that if he spoke of his own life — it seemed very far away — no one except Dan (and even Dan's belief was sorely tried) credited him. So he invented a friend, a boy he had heard of, who drove a miniature four-pony drag in Toledo, Ohio, and ordered five suits of clothes at a time, and led things called "germans" at parties where the oldest girl was not quite fifteen, but all the presents were solid silver. Salters protested that this kind of yarn was desperately wicked, if not indeed positively blasphemous, but he listened as greedily as the others; and their criticisms at the end gave Harvey entirely new notions on "germans," clothes, cigarettes with gold-leaf tips, rings, watches, scent, small dinner-parties, champagne, card-playing, and hotel accommodation. Little by little he changed his tone when speaking of his "friend," whom Long Jack had christened "the Crazy Kid," "the Gilt-edged Baby," "the Suckin' Vanderpoop," and other pet names; and with his sea-booted feet cocked up on the table would even invent histories about silk pajamas and specially imported neckwear, to the "friend's" discredit. Harvey was a very adaptable person, with a keen eye and ear for every face and tone about him.

Before long he knew where Disko kept the old green-crusted quadrant that they called the "hog-

yoke"—under the bed-bag in his bunk. When he took the sun, and with the help of "The Old Farmer's" almanac found the latitude, Harvey would jump down into the cabin and scratch the reckoning and date with a nail on the rust of the stove-pipe. Now, the chief engineer of the liner could have done no more, and no engineer of thirty years' service could have assumed one half of the ancient-mariner air with which Harvey, first careful to spit over the side, made public the schooner's position for that day, and then and not till then relieved Disko of the quadrant. There is an etiquette in all these things.

The said "hog-yoke," an Eldridge chart, the farming almanac, Blunt's "Coast Pilot," and Bowditch's "Navigator" were all the weapons Disko needed to guide him, except the deep-sea lead that was his spare eye. Harvey nearly slew Penn with it when Tom Platt taught him first how to "fly the blue pigeon"; and, though his strength was not equal to continuous sounding in any sort of a sea, for calm weather with a seven-pound lead on shoal water Disko used him freely. As Dan said: "'Tain't soundin's dad wants. It's samples. Grease her up good, Harve." Harvey would tallow the cup at the end, and carefully bring the sand, shell, sludge, or whatever it might be, to Disko, who fingered and smelt it and gave judgment. As has been said, when Disko thought of

cod he thought as a cod; and by some long-tested mixture of instinct and experience, moved the *We're Here* from berth to berth, always with the fish, as a blindfolded chess-player moves on the unseen board.

But Disko's board was the Grand Bank — a triangle two hundred and fifty miles on each side — a waste of wallowing sea, cloaked with dank fog, vexed with gales, harried with drifting ice, scored by the tracks of the reckless liners, and dotted with the sails of the fishing-fleet.

For days they worked in fog — Harvey at the bell — till, grown familiar with the thick airs, he went out with Tom Platt, his heart rather in his mouth. But the fog would not lift, and the fish were biting, and no one can stay helplessly afraid for six hours at a time. Harvey devoted himself to his lines and the gaff or gob-stick as Tom Platt called for them; and they rowed back to the schooner guided by the bell and Tom's instinct; Manuel's conch sounding thin and faint beside them. But it was an unearthly experience, and, for the first time in a month, Harvey dreamed of the shifting, smoking floors of water round the dory, the lines that strayed away into nothing, and the air above that melted on the sea below ten feet from his straining eyes. A few days later he was out with Manuel on what should have been forty-fathom bottom, but the whole length of the roding ran

out, and still the anchor found nothing, and Harvey grew mortally afraid, for that his last touch with earth was lost. "Whale-hole," said Manuel, hauling in. "That is good joke on Disko. Come!" and he rowed to the schooner to find Tom Platt and the others jeering at the skipper because, for once, he had led them to the edge of the barren Whale-deep, the blank hole of the Grand Bank. They made another berth through the fog, and that time the hair of Harvey's head stood up when he went out in Manuel's dory. A whiteness moved in the whiteness of the fog with a breath like the breath of the grave, and there was a roaring, a plunging, and spouting. It was his first introduction to the dread summer berg of the Banks, and he cowered in the bottom of the boat while Manuel laughed. There were days, though, clear and soft and warm, when it seemed a sin to do anything but loaf over the hand-lines and spank the drifting "sun-scalds" with an oar; and there were days of light airs, when Harvey was taught how to steer the schooner from one berth to another.

It thrilled through him when he first felt the keel answer to his hand on the spokes and slide over the long hollows as the foresail scythed back and forth against the blue sky. That was magnificent, in spite of Disko saying that it would break a snake's back to follow his wake. But, as

usual, pride ran before a fall. They were sailing on the wind with the staysail — an old one, luckily — set, and Harvey jammed her right into it to show Dan how completely he had mastered the art. The foresail went over with a bang, and the foregaff stabbed and ripped through the staysail, which, was of course, prevented from going over by the mainstay. They lowered the wreck in awful silence, and Harvey spent his leisure hours for the next few days under Tom Platt's lee, learning to use a needle and palm. Dan hooted with joy, for, as he said, he had made the very same blunder himself in his early days.

Boylike, Harvey imitated all the men by turns, till he had combined Disko's peculiar stoop at the wheel, Long Jack's swinging overhand when the lines were hauled, Manuel's round-shouldered but effective stroke in a dory, and Tom Platt's generous *Ohio* stride along the deck.

"'Tis beautiful to see how he takes to ut," said Long Jack, when Harvey was looking out by the windlass one thick noon. "I'll lay my wage an' share 'tis more'n half play-actin' to him, an' he consates himself he's a bowld mariner. Watch his little bit av a back now!"

"That's the way we all begin," said Tom Platt. "The boys they make believe all the time till they've cheated 'emselves into bein' men, an' so till they die — pretendin' an' pretendin'. *I* done

it on the old *Ohio*, I know. Stood my first watch — harbor-watch — feelin' finer'n Farragut. Dan's full o' the same kind o' notions. See 'em now, actin' to be genewine moss-backs — every hair a rope-yarn an' blood Stockholm tar." He spoke down the cabin stairs. "'Guess you're mistook in your judgments fer once, Disko. What in Rome made ye tell us all here the kid was crazy?"

"He wuz," Disko replied. "Crazy ez a loon when he come aboard; but I'll say he's sobered up consid'ble sence. I cured him."

"He yarns good," said Tom Platt. "T'other night he told us abaout a kid of his own size steerin' a cunnin' little rig an' four ponies up an' down Toledo, Ohio, I think 'twas, an' givin' suppers to a crowd o' sim'lar kids. Cur'us kind o' fairy-tale, but blame interestin'. He knows scores of 'em."

"'Guess he strikes 'em outen his own head," Disko called from the cabin, where he was busy with the log-book. "'Stands to reason that sort is all made up. It don't take in no one but Dan, an' he laughs at it. I've heard him, behind my back."

"Y'ever hear what Sim'on Peter Ca'houn said when they whacked up a match 'twix' his sister Hitty an' Lorin' Jerauld, an' the boys put up that joke on him daown to Georges?" drawled Uncle Salters, who was dripping peaceably under the lee of the starboard dory-nest.

Tom Platt puffed at his pipe in scornful silence: he was a Cape Cod man, and had not known that tale more than twenty years. Uncle Salters went on with a rasping chuckle:

"Sim'on Peter Ca'houn he said, an' he was jest right, abaout Lorin', 'Ha'af on the taown,' he said, 'an' t'other ha'af blame fool; an' they told me she's married a 'ich man.' Sim'on Peter Ca'houn he hedn't no roof to his mouth, an' talked that way."

"He didn't talk any Pennsylvania Dutch," Tom Platt replied. "You'd better leave a Cape man to tell that tale. The Ca'houns was gipsies frum 'way back."

"Wal, I don't profess to be any elocutionist," Salters said. "I'm comin' to the moral o' things. That's jest abaout what aour Harve be! Ha'af on the taown, an' t'other ha'af blame fool; an' there's some'll believe he's a rich man. Yah!"

"Did ye ever think how sweet 'twould be to sail wid a full crew o' Salterses?" said Long Jack. "Ha'af in the furrer an' other ha'af in the muckheap, as Ca'houn did *not* say, an' makes out he's a fisherman!"

A little laugh went round at Salters's expense.

Disko held his tongue, and wrought over the log-book that he kept in a hatchet-faced, square hand; this was the kind of thing that ran on, page after soiled page:

"*July* 17. *This day thick fog and few fish. Made herth to northward. So ends this day.*

"*July* 18. *This day comes in with thick fog. Caught a few fish.*

"*July* 19. *This day comes in with light breeze from N. E. and fine weather. Made a berth to eastward. Caught plenty fish.*

"*July* 20. *This, the Sabbath, comes in with fog and light winds. So ends this day. Total fish caught this week,* 3,478."

They never worked on Sundays, but shaved, and washed themselves if it were fine, and Pennsylvania sang hymns. Once or twice he suggested that, if it was not an impertinence, he thought he could preach a little. Uncle Salters nearly jumped down his throat at the mere notion, reminding him that he was not a preacher and mustn't think of such things. We'd hev him rememberin' Johnstown next," Salters explained, "an' what would happen then?" So they compromised on his reading aloud from a book called "Josephus." It was an old leather-bound volume, smelling of a hundred voyages, very solid and very like the Bible, but enlivened with accounts of battles and sieges; and they read it nearly from cover to cover. Otherwise Penn was a silent little body. He would not utter a word for three days on end sometimes, though he played checkers, listened to the songs, and laughed at the stories.

When they tried to stir him up, he would answer. "I don't wish to seem unneighbourly, but it is because I have nothing to say. My head feels quite empty. I've almost forgotten my name." He would turn to Uncle Salters with an expectant smile.

"Why, Pennsylvania *Pratt*," Salters would shout. "You'll fergit *me* next!"

"No — never," Penn would say, shutting his lips firmly. "Pennsylvania Pratt, of course," he would repeat over and over. Sometimes it was Uncle Salters who forgot, and told him he was Haskins or Rich or McVitty; but Penn was equally content — till next time.

He was always very tender with Harvey, whom he pitied both as a lost child and as a lunatic; and when Salters saw that Penn liked the boy, he relaxed, too. Salters was not an amiable person (he esteemed it his business to keep the boys in order); and the first time Harvey, in fear and trembling, on a still day, managed to shin up to the main-truck (Dan was behind him ready to help), he esteemed it *his* duty to hang Salters's big sea-boots up there — a sight of shame and derision to the nearest schooner. With Disko, Harvey took no liberties; not even when the old man dropped direct orders, and treated him, like the rest of the crew, to "Don't you want to do so and so?" and "Guess you'd better," and so forth. There was

something about the clean-shaven lips and the puckered corners of the eyes that was mightily sobering to young blood.

Disko showed him the meaning of the thumbed and pricked chart, which, he said, laid over any government publication whatsoever; led him, pencil in hand, from berth to berth over the whole string of banks — Le Have, Western, Banquereau, St. Pierre, Green, and Grand — talking "cod" meantime. Taught him, too, the principle on which the "hog-yoke" was worked.

In this Harvey excelled Dan, for he had inherited a head for figures, and the notion of stealing information from one glimpse of the sullen Bank sun appealed to all his keen wits. For other sea-matters his age handicapped him. As Disko said, he should have begun when he was ten. Dan could bait up trawl or lay his hand on any rope in the dark; and at a pinch, when Uncle Salters had a gurry-sore on his palm, could dress down by sense of touch. He could steer in anything short of half a gale from the feel of the wind on his face, humouring the *We're Here* just when she needed it. These things he did as automatically as he skipped about the rigging, or made his dory a part of his own will and body. But he could not communicate his knowledge to Harvey.

Still there was a good deal of general informa-

tion flying about the schooner on stormy days, when they lay up in the fo'c'sle or sat on the cabin lockers, while spare eye-bolts, leads, and rings rolled and rattled in the pauses of the talk. Disko spoke of whaling voyages in the Fifties; of great she-whales slain beside their young; of death agonies on the black, tossing seas, and blood that spurted forty feet in the air; of boats smashed to splinters; of patent rockets that went off wrong-end-first and bombarded the trembling crews; of cutting-in and boiling-down, and that terrible "nip" of '71, when twelve hundred men were made homeless on the ice in three days — wonderful tales, all true. But more wonderful still were his stories of the cod, and how they argued and reasoned on their private businesses deep down below the keel.

Long Jack's tastes ran more to the supernatural. He held them silent with ghastly stories of the "Yo-hoes" on Monomoy Beach, that mock and terrify lonely clam-diggers; of sand-walkers and dune-haunters who were never properly buried; of hidden treasure on Fire Island guarded by the spirits of Kidd's men; of ships that sailed in the fog straight over Truro township; of that harbour in Maine where no one but a stranger will lie at anchor twice in a certain place because of a dead crew who row alongside at midnight with the anchor in the bow of their old-fashioned boat,

whistling — not calling, but whistling — for the soul of the man who broke their rest.

Harvey had a notion that the east coast of his native land, from Mount Desert south, was populated chiefly by people who took their horses there in the summer and entertained in country-houses with hardwood floors and Vantine portières. He laughed at the ghost-tales,— not as much as he would have done a month before,— but ended by sitting still and shuddering.

Tom Platt dealt with his interminable trip round the Horn on the old *Ohio* in the flogging days, with a navy more extinct than the dodo — the navy that passed away in the great war. He told them how red-hot shot are dropped into a cannon, a wad of wet clay between them and the cartridge; how they sizzle and reek when they strike wood, and how the little ship-boys of the *Miss Jim Buck* hove water over them and shouted to the fort to try again. And he told tales of blockade — long weeks of swaying at anchor, varied only by the departure and return of steamers that had used up their coal (there was no change for the sailing-ships); of gales and cold— cold that kept two hundred men, night and day, pounding and chopping at the ice on cable, blocks, and rigging, when the galley was as red-hot as the fort's shot, and men drank cocoa by the bucket. Tom Platt had no use for steam. His

service closed when that thing was comparatively new. He admitted that it was a specious invention in time of peace, but looked hopefully for the day when sails should come back again on ten-thousand-ton frigates with hundred-and-ninety-foot booms.

Manuel's talk was slow and gentle — all about pretty girls in Madeira washing clothes in the dry beds of streams, by moonlight, under waving bananas; legends of saints, and tales of queer dances or fights away in the cold Newfoundland baiting-ports. Salters was mainly agricultural; for, though he read "Josephus" and expounded it, his mission in life was to prove the value of green manures, and specially of clover, against every form of phosphate whatsoever. He grew libellous about phosphates; he dragged greasy "Orange Judd" books from his bunk and intoned them, wagging his finger at Harvey, to whom it was all Greek. Little Penn was so genuinely pained when Harvey made fun of Salters's lectures that the boy gave it up, and suffered in polite silence. That was very good for Harvey.

The cook naturally did not join in these conversations. As a rule, he spoke only when it was absolutely necessary; but at times a queer gift of speech descended on him, and he held forth, half in Gaelic, half in broken English, an hour at a time. He was specially communicative with the

boys, and he never withdrew his prophecy that one day Harvey would be Dan's master, and that he would see it. He told them of mail-carrying in the winter up Cape Breton way, of the dog-train that goes to Coudray, and of the ram-steamer *Arctic*, that breaks the ice between the mainland and Prince Edward Island. Then he told them stories that his mother had told him, of life far to the southward, where water never froze; and he said that when he died his soul would go to lie down on a warm white beach of sand with palm-trees waving above. That seemed to the boys a very odd idea for a man who had never seen a palm in his life. Then, too, regularly at each meal, he would ask Harvey, and Harvey alone, whether the cooking was to his taste; and this always made the "second half" laugh. Yet they had a great respect for the cook's judgment, and in their hearts considered Harvey something of a mascot by consequence.

And while Harvey was taking in knowledge of new things at each pore and hard health with every gulp of the good air, the *We're Here* went her ways and did her business on the Bank, and the silvery-grey kenches of well-pressed fish mounted higher and higher in the hold. No one day's work was out of the common, but the average days were many and close together.

Naturally, a man of Disko's reputation was

closely watched — "scrowged upon," Dan called it — by his neighbours, but he had a very pretty knack of giving them the slip through the curdling, glidy fog-banks. Disko avoided company for two reasons. He wished to make his own experiments, in the first place; and in the second, he objected to the mixed gatherings of a fleet of all nations. The bulk of them were mainly Gloucester boats, with a scattering from Provincetown, Harwich, Chatham, and some of the Maine ports, but the crews drew from goodness knows where. Risk breeds recklessness, and when greed is added there are fine chances for every kind of accident in the crowded fleet, which, like a mob of sheep, is huddled round some unrecognised leader. "Let the two Jeraulds lead 'em," said Disko. "We're baound to lay among 'em fer a spell on the Eastern Shoals; though ef luck holds, we won't hev to lay long. Where we are naow, Harve, ain't considered noways good graound."

"Ain't it?" said Harvey, who was drawing water (he had learned just how to wiggle the bucket), after an unusually long dressing-down. "Shouldn't mind striking some poor ground for a change, then."

"All the graound I want to see — don't want to strike her — is Eastern Point," said Dan. "Say, dad, it looks 's if we wouldn't hev to lay

more'n two weeks on the Shoals. You'll meet all the comp'ny you want then, Harve. That's the time we begin to work. No reg'lar meals fer no one then. 'Mug-up when ye're hungry, an' sleep when ye can't keep awake. Good job you wasn't picked up a month later than you was, or we'd never ha' had you dressed in shape fer the Old Virgin."

Harvey understood from the Eldridge chart that the Old Virgin and a nest of curiously named shoals were the turning-point of the cruise, and that with good luck they would wet the balance of their salt there. But seeing the size of the Virgin (it was one tiny dot), he wondered how even Disko with the hog-yoke and the lead could find her. He learned later that Disko was entirely equal to that and any other business, and could even help others. A big four-by-five blackboard hung in the cabin, and Harvey never understood the need of it till, after some blinding thick days, they heard the unmelodious tooting of a foot-power fog-horn — a machine whose note is as that of a consumptive elephant.

They were making a short berth, towing the anchor under their foot to save trouble. "Square-rigger bellowin' fer his latitude," said Long Jack. The dripping red headsails of a bark glided out of the fog, and the *We're Here* rang her bell thrice, using sea shorthand.

The larger boat backed her topsail with shrieks and shoutings.

"Frenchman," said Uncle Salters, scornfully. "Miquelon boat from St. Malo." The farmer had a weatherly sea-eye. "I'm most outer 'baccy, too, Disko."

"Same here," said Tom Platt. "Hi! *Backez vouz — backez vouz! Standez awayez*, you butt-ended *mucho-bono!* Where you from — St. Malo, eh?"

"Ah, ha! *Mucho bono! Oui! oui! Clos Poulet — St. Malo! St. Pierre et Miquelon*," cried the other crowd, waving woollen caps and laughing. Then all together, "*Bord! Bord!*"

"Bring up the board, Danny. Beats me how them Frenchmen fetch anywheres, exceptin' America's fairish broadly. Forty-six forty-nine's good enough fer them; an' I guess it's abaout right, too."

Dan chalked the figures on the board, and they hung it in the main-rigging to a chorus of *mercis* from the bark.

"Seems kinder unneighbourly to let 'em swedge off like this," Salters suggested, feeling in his pockets.

"Hev ye learned French then sence last trip?" said Disko. "*I* don't want no more stone-ballast hove at us 'long o' your callin' Miquelon boats 'footy cochins,' same's you did off Le Have."

"Harmon Rush he said that was the way to rise 'em. Plain United States is good enough fer me. We're all dretful short on terbakker. Young feller, don't *you* speak French?"

"Oh, yes," said Harvey, valiantly; and he bawled: "Hi! Say! *Arrêtez vous! Aitendez! Nous sommes venant pour tabac.*"

"Ah, *tabac, tabac!*" they cried, and laughed again.

"That hit 'em. Let's heave a dory over, anyway," said Tom Platt. "I don't exactly hold no certificates on French, but I know another lingo that goes, I guess. Come on, Harve, an' interpret."

The raffle and confusion when he and Harvey were hauled up the bark's black side was indescribable. Her cabin was all stuck round with glaring coloured prints of the Virgin—the Virgin of Newfoundland, they called her. Harvey found his French of no recognised Bank brand, and his conversation was limited to nods and grins. But Tom Platt waved his arms and got along swimmingly. The captain gave him a drink of unspeakable gin, and the opera-comique crew, with their hairy throats, red caps, and long knives, greeted him as a brother. Then the trade began. They had tobacco, plenty of it—American, that had never paid duty to France. They wanted chocolate and crackers. Harvey rowed back to

arrange with the cook and Disko, who owned the stores, and on his return the cocoa-tins and cracker-bags were counted out by the Frenchman's wheel. It looked like a piratical division of loot; but Tom Platt came out of it roped with black pig-tail and stuffed with cakes of chewing and smoking tobacco. Then those jovial mariners swung off into the mist, and the last Harvey heard was a gay chorus:

"Par derrière chez ma tante,
Il y a un bois joli,
Et le rossignol y chante
Et le jour et la nuit . . .
Que donneriez vous, belle,
Qui l'amènerait ici?
Je donnerai Québec,
Sorel et Saint Denis."

"How was it my French didn't go, and your sign-talk did?" Harvey demanded when the barter had been distributed among the *We're Heres*.

"Sign-talk!" Platt guffawed. "Well, yes, 'twas sign-talk, but a heap older'n your French, Harve. Them French boats are chock-full o' Freemasons, an' that's why."

"Are you a Freemason, then?"

"Looks that way, don't it?" said the man-o'-war's man, stuffing his pipe; and Harvey had another mystery of the deep sea to brood upon.

CHAPTER VI

THE thing that struck him most was the exceedingly casual way in which some craft loafed about the broad Atlantic. Fishing-boats, as Dan said, were naturally dependent on the courtesy and wisdom of their neighbours; but one expected better things of steamers. That was after another interesting interview, when they had been chased for three miles by a big lumbering old cattle-boat, all boarded over on the upper deck, that smelt like a thousand cattle-pens. A very excited officer yelled at them through a speaking-trumpet, and she lay and lollopped helplessly on the water while Disko ran the *We're Here* under her lee and gave the skipper a piece of his mind. "Where might ye be — eh? Ye don't deserve to be anywheres. You barn-yard tramps go hoggin' the road on the high seas with no blame consideration fer your neighbours, an' your eyes in your coffee-cups instid o' in your silly heads."

At this the skipper danced on the bridge and said something about Disko's own eyes. "We haven't had an observation for three days. D'you suppose we can run her blind?" he shouted.

"Wa-al, *I* can," Disko retorted. "What's come to your lead? Et it? Can't ye smell bottom, or are them cattle too rank?"

"What d'ye feed 'em?" said Uncle Salters with intense seriousness, for the smell of the pens woke all the farmer in him. "They say they fall off dretful on a v'yage. Dunno as it's any o' my business, but I've a kind o' notion that oil-cake broke small an' sprinkled —"

"Thunder!" said a cattle-man in a red jersey as he looked over the side. "What asylum did they let His Whiskers out of?"

"Young feller," Salters began, standing up in the fore-rigging, "let me tell *yeou* 'fore we go any further that I've —"

The officer on the bridge took off his cap with immense politeness. "Excuse me," he said, "but I've asked for my reckoning. If the agricultural person with the hair will kindly shut his head, the sea-green barnacle with the wall-eye may per-haps condescend to enlighten us."

"Naow you've made a show o' me, Salters," said Disko, angrily. He could not stand up to that particular sort of talk, and snapped out the latitude and longitude without more lectures.

"Well, that's a boat-load of lunatics, sure," said the skipper, as he rang up the engine-room and tossed a bundle of newspapers into the schooner.

"Of *all* the blamed fools, next to you, Salters,

Uncle Salters

him an' his crowd are abaout the likeliest I've ever seen," said Disko as the *We're Here* slid away. "I was jest givin' him my jedgment on lullsikin' round these waters like a lost child, an' you must cut in with your fool farmin'. Can't ye never keep things sep'rate?"

Harvey, Dan, and the others stood back, winking one to the other and full of joy; but Disko and Salters wrangled seriously till evening, Salters arguing that a cattle-boat was practically a barn on blue water, and Disko insisting that, even if this were the case, decency and fisher-pride demanded that he should have kept "things sep'rate." Long Jack stood it in silence for a time,—an angry skipper makes an unhappy crew,—and then he spoke across the table after supper:

"Fwhat's the good o' bodderin' fwhat they'll say?" said he.

"They'll tell that tale ag'in' us fer years—that's all," said Disko. "Oil-cake sprinkled!"

"With salt, o' course," said Salters, impenitent, reading the farming reports from a week-old New York paper.

"It's plumb mortifyin' to all my feelin's," the skipper went on.

"Can't see ut that way," said Long Jack, the peacemaker. "Look at here, Disko! Is there another packet afloat this day in this weather c'u'd ha' met a tramp an', over an' above givin' her her

reckonin',— over an' above that, I say,— c'u'd ha' discoorsed wid her quite intelligent on the management av steers an' such at sea? Forgit ut! Av coorse they will not. 'Twas the most compenjus conversation that iver accrued. Double game an' twice runnin'— all to us." Dan kicked Harvey under the table, and Harvey choked in his cup.

"Well," said Salters, who felt that his honour had been somewhat plastered, "I *said* I didn't know as 'twuz any business o' mine, 'fore I spoke."

"An' right there," said Tom Platt, experienced in discipline and etiquette — "right there, I take it, Disko, you should ha' asked him to stop ef the conversation wuz likely, in your jedgment, to be anyways — what it shouldn't."

"'Dunno but that's so," said Disko, who saw his way to an honourable retreat from a fit of the dignities.

"Why, o' course it was so," said Salters, "you bein' skipper here; an' I'd cheerful hev stopped on a hint — not from any leadin' *or* conviction, but fer the sake o' bearin' an example to these two blame boys of aours."

"Didn't I tell you, Harve, 'twould come araound to us 'fore we'd done? Always those blame boys. But I wouldn't have missed the show fer a half-share in a halibutter," Dan whispered.

"*Still*, things should ha' been kep' sep'rate," said Disko, and the light of new argument lit in Salters's eye as he crumbled cut plug into his pipe.

"There's a power av vartue in keepin' things sep'rate," said Long Jack, intent on stilling the storm. "That's fwhat Steyning of Steyning and Hare's f'und when he sent Counahan fer skipper on the *Marilla D. Kuhn*, instid o' Cap. Newton that was took with inflam't'ry rheumatism an' couldn't go. Counahan the Navigator we called him."

"Nick Counahan he never went aboard fer a night 'thout a pond o' rum somewheres in the manifest," said Tom Platt, playing up to the lead. "He used to bum araound the c'mission houses to Boston lookin' fer the Lord to make him captain of a towboat on his merits. Sam Coy, up to Atlantic Avenoo, give him his board free fer a year or more on account of his stories. Counahan the Navigator! Tck! Tck! Dead these fifteen year, ain't he?"

"Seventeen, I guess. He died the year the *Caspar McVeagh* was built; but he could niver keep things sep'rate. Steyning tuk him fer the reason the thief tuk the hot stove — bekaze there was nothin' else that season. The men was all to the Banks, and Counahan he whacked up an iverlastin' hard crowd fer crew. Rum! Ye c'u'd ha'

floated the *Marilla*, insurance and all, in fwhat they stowed aboard her. They lef' Boston Harbour for the great Grand Bank wid a roarin' nor'wester behind 'em an' all hands full to the bung. An' the hivens looked after thim, for divil a watch did they set, an' divil a rope did they lay hand to, till they'd seen the bottom av a fifteen-gallon cask o' bug-juice. That was about wan week, so far as Counahan remembered. (If I c'u'd only tell the tale as he told ut!) All that whoile the wind blew like ould glory, an' the *Marilla* — 'twas summer, and they'd give her a foretopmast — struck her gait and kept ut. Then Counahan tuk the hog-yoke an' thrembled over it for a whoile, an' made out, betwix' that an' the chart an' the singin' in his head, that they was to the south'ard o' Sable Island, gettin' along glorious, but speakin' nothin'. Then they broached another keg, an' quit speculatin' about anythin' fer another spell. The *Marilla* she lay down whin she dropped Boston Light, and she never lufted her lee-rail up to that time — hustlin' on one an' the same slant. But they saw no weed, nor gulls, nor schooners; an' prisintly they obsarved they'd been out a matter o' fourteen days, and they mistrusted the Bank had suspinded payment. So they sounded, an' got sixty fathom. 'That's me,' sez Counahan. 'That's me iv'ry time! I've run her slat on the Bank fer you, an' when we get thirty fathom we'll

turn in like little men. Counahan is the b'y,' sez he. 'Counahan the Navigator!'

"Nex' cast they got ninety. Sez Counahan: 'Either the lead-line's tuk too stretchin' or else the Bank's sunk.'

"They hauled ut up, bein' just about in that state when ut seemed right an' reasonable, and sat down on the deck countin' the knots, an' gettin' her snarled up hijjus. The *Marilla* she'd struck her gait, and she hild ut, an' prisintly along come a tramp, an' Counahan spoke her.

"'Hev ye seen any fishin'-boats now?' sez he, quite casual.

"'There's lashin's av them off the Irish coast,' sez the tramp.

"'Aah! go shake yerself,' sez Counahan. 'Fwhat have I to do wid the Irish coast?'

"'Then fwhat are ye doin' here?' sez the tramp.

"'Sufferin' Christianity!' sez Counahan (he always said that whin his pumps sucked an' he was not feelin' good)—'Sufferin' Christianity!' he sez, 'where am I at?'

"'Thirty-five mile west-sou'west o' Cape Clear,' sez the tramp, 'if that's any consolation to you.'

"Counahan fetched wan jump, four feet sivin inches, measured by the cook.

"'Consolation!' sez he, bould ez brass. 'D'ye take me fer a dialect? Thirty-five mile from

Cape Clear, an' fourteen days from Boston Light. Sufferin' Christianity, 'tis a record, an' by the same token I've a mother to Skibbereen!' Think av ut! The gall av um! But ye see he could niver keep things sep'rate.

"The crew was mostly Cork an' Kerry men, barrin' one Marylander that wanted to go back, but they called him a mutineer, an' they ran the ould *Marilla* into Skibbereen, an' they had an illigant time visitin' around with frinds on the ould sod fer a week. Thin they wint back, an' it cost 'em two an' thirty days to beat to the Banks again. 'Twas gettin' on towards fall, and grub was low, so Counahan ran her back to Boston, wid no more bones to ut."

"And what did the firm say?" Harvey demanded.

"Fwhat could they? The fish was on the Banks, an' Counahan was at T-wharf talkin' av his record trip east! They tuk their satisfaction out av that, an' ut all came av not keepin' the crew and the rum sep'rate in the first place; an' confusin' Skibbereen wid 'Queereau, in the second. Counahan the Navigator, rest his sowl! He was an imprompju citizen!"

"Once I was in the *Lucy Holmes*," said Manuel, in his gentle voice. "They not want any of her feesh in Gloucester. Eh, wha-at? Give us no price. So we go across the water, and think to

sell to some Fayal man. Then it blow fresh, and we cannot see well. Eh, wha-at? Then it blow some more fresh, and we go down below and drive very fast—no one know where. By-and-by we see a land, and it get some hot. Then come two, three nigger in a brick. Eh, wha-at? We ask where we are, and they say — now, what you all think?"

"Grand Canary," said Disko, after a moment. Manuel shook his head, smiling.

"Blanco," said Tom Platt.

"No. Worse than that. We was below Bezagos, and the brick she was from Liberia! So we sell our feesh *there!* Not bad, so? Eh, wha-at?"

"Can a schooner like this go right across to Africa?" said Harvey.

"Go araound the Horn ef there's anythin' worth goin' fer, and the grub holds aout," said Disko. "My father he run his packet, an' she was a kind o' pinkey, abaout fifty ton, I guess,— the *Rupert*, —he run her over to Greenland's icy mountains the year ha'af our fleet was tryin' after cod there. An' what's more, he took my mother along with him,—to show her haow the money was earned, I presoom,— an' they was all iced up, an' I was born at Disko. Don't remember nothin' abaout it, o' course. We come back when the ice eased in the spring, but they named me fer the place.

Kinder mean trick to put up on a baby, but we're all baound to make mistakes in aour lives."

"Sure! Sure!" said Salters, wagging his head. "All baound to make mistakes, an' I tell you two boys here thet after you've made a mistake — ye don't make fewer'n a hundred a day — the next best thing's to own up to it like men."

Long Jack winked one tremendous wink that embraced all hands except Disko and Salters, and the incident was closed.

Then they made berth after berth to the northward, the dories out almost every day, running along the east edge of the Grand Bank in thirty- to forty-fathom water, and fishing steadily.

It was here Harvey first met the squid, who is one of the best cod-baits, but uncertain in his moods. They were waked out of their bunks one black night by yells of "Squid O!" from Salters, and for an hour and a half every soul aboard hung over his squid-jig — a piece of lead painted red and armed at the lower end with a circle of pins bent backward like half-opened umbrella ribs. The squid — for some unknown reason — likes, and wraps himself round, this thing, and is hauled up ere he can escape from the pins. But as he leaves his home he squirts first water and next ink into his captor's face; and it was curious to see the men weaving their heads from side to side to dodge the shot. They

were as black as sweeps when the flurry ended; but a pile of fresh squid lay on the deck, and the large cod thinks very well of a little shiny piece of squid-tentacle at the tip of a clam-baited hook. Next day they caught many fish, and met the *Carrie Pitman*, to whom they shouted their luck, and she wanted to trade — seven cod for one fair-sized squid; but Disko would not agree at the price, and the *Carrie* dropped sullenly to leeward and anchored half a mile away, in the hope of striking on to some for herself.

Disko said nothing till after supper, when he sent Dan and Manuel out to buoy the *We're Here's* cable and announced his intention of turning in with the broad-axe. Dan naturally repeated these remarks to a dory from the *Carrie*, who wanted to know why they were buoying their cable, since they were not on rocky bottom.

"Dad sez he wouldn't trust a ferryboat within five mile o' you," Dan howled cheerfully.

"Why don't he git out, then? Who's hinderin'?" said the other.

"'Cause you've jest the same ez lee-bowed him, an' he don't take that from any boat, not to speak o' sech a driftin' gurry-butt as you be."

"She ain't driftin' any this trip," said the man, angrily, for the *Carrie Pitman* had an unsavoury reputation for breaking her ground-tackle.

"Then haow d'you make berths?" said Dan.

"It's her best p'int o' sailin'. An' ef she's quit driftin', what in thunder are you doin' with a new jib-boom?" That shot went home.

"Hey, you Portugoosy organ-grinder, take your monkey back to Gloucester. Go back to school, Dan Troop," was the answer.

"O-ver-alls! O-ver-alls!" yelled Dan, who knew that one of the *Carrie's* crew had worked in an overall factory the winter before.

"Shrimp! Gloucester shrimp! Git aout, you Novy!"

To call a Gloucester man a Nova Scotian is not well received. Dan answered in kind.

"Novy yourself, ye Scrabble-towners! ye Chatham wreckers! Git aout with your brick in your stockin'!" And the forces separated, but Chatham had the worst of it.

"I knew haow 'twould be," said Disko. "She's drawed the wind raound already. Some one oughter put a *dee*sist on thet packet. She'll snore till midnight, an' jest when we're gittin' our sleep she'll strike adrift. Good job we ain't crowded with craft hereaways. But I ain't goin' to up anchor fer Chatham. She may hold."

The wind, which had hauled round, rose at sundown and blew steadily. There was not enough sea, though, to disturb even a dory's tackle, but the *Carrie Pitman* was a law unto herself. At the end of the boys' watch they heard

the *crack-crack-crack* of a huge muzzle-loading revolver aboard her.

"Glory, glory, hallelujah!" sung Dan. "Here she comes, dad; butt-end first, walkin' in her sleep same's she done on 'Queereau."

Had she been any other boat Disko would have taken his chances, but now he cut the cable as the *Carrie Pitman*, with all the North Atlantic to play in, lurched down directly upon them. The *We're Here*, under jib and riding-sail, gave her no more room than was absolutely necessary,—Disko did not wish to spend a week hunting for his cable,—but scuttled up into the wind as the *Carrie* passed within easy hail, a silent and angry boat, at the mercy of a raking broadside of Bank chaff.

"Good evenin'," said Disko, raising his headgear, "an' haow does your garden grow?"

"Go to Ohio an' hire a mule," said Uncle Salters. "We don't want no farmers here."

"Will I lend you my dory-anchor?" cried Long Jack.

"Unship your rudder an' stick it in the mud," said Tom Platt.

"Say!" Dan's voice rose shrill and high, as he stood on the wheel-box. "Sa-ay! Is there a strike in the o-ver-all factory; or hev they hired girls, ye Shackamaxons?"

"Veer out the tiller-lines," cried Harvey, "and

nail 'em to the bottom." That was a salt-flavoured jest he had been put up to by Tom Platt. Manuel leaned over the stern and yelled; "Johnna Morgan play the organ! Ahaaaa!" He flourished his broad thumb with a gesture of unspeakable contempt and derision, while little Penn covered himself with glory by piping up: "Gee a little! Hssh! Come here. Haw!"

They rode on their chain for the rest of the night, a short, snappy, uneasy motion, as Harvey found, and wasted half the forenoon recovering the cable. But the boys agreed the trouble was cheap at the price of triumph and glory, and they thought with grief over all the beautiful things that they might have said to the discomfited *Carrie.*

CHAPTER VII

NEXT day they fell in with more sails, all circling slowly from the east northerly towards the west. But just when they expected to make the shoals by the Virgin the fog shut down, and they anchored, surrounded by the tinklings of invisible bells. There was not much fishing, but occasionally dory met dory in the fog and exchanged news.

That night, a little before dawn, Dan and Harvey, who had been sleeping most of the day, tumbled out to "hook" fried pies. There was no reason why they should not have taken them openly; but they tasted better so, and it made the cook angry. The heat and smell below drove them on deck with their plunder, and they found Disko at the bell, which he handed over to Harvey.

"Keep her goin'," said he. "I mistrust I hear somethin'. Ef it's anything, I'm best where I am so's to get at things."

It was a forlorn little jingle; the thick air seemed to pinch it off; and in the pauses Harvey heard

the muffled shriek of a liner's siren, and he knew enough of the Banks to know what that meant. It came to him, with horrible distinctness, how a boy in a cherry-coloured jersey — he despised fancy blazers now with all a fisherman's contempt — how an ignorant, rowdy boy had once said it would be "great" if a steamer ran down a fishing-boat. That boy had a state-room with a hot and cold bath, and spent ten minutes each morning picking over a gilt-edged bill of fare. And that same boy — no, his very much older brother — was up at four of the dim dawn in streaming, crackling oilskins, hammering, literally for the dear life, on a bell smaller than the steward's breakfast-bell, while somewhere close at hand a thirty-foot steel stem was storming along at twenty miles an hour! The bitterest thought of all was that there were folks asleep in dry, upholstered cabins who would never learn that they had massacred a boat before breakfast. So Harvey rang the bell.

"Yes, they slow daown one turn o' their blame propeller," said Dan, applying himself to Manuel's conch, "fer to keep inside the law, an' that's consolin' when we're all at the bottom. Hark to her! She's a humper!"

"*Aoooo — whoooo — whupp!*" went the siren. "*Wingle — tingle — tink*," went the bell. "*Graaa — ouch!*" went the conch, while sea and sky were

all milled up in milky fog. Then Harvey felt that he was near a moving body, and found himself looking up and up at the wet edge of a cliff-like bow, leaping, it seemed, directly over the schooner. A jaunty little feather of water curled in front of it, and as it lifted it showed a long ladder of Roman numerals — XV., XVI., XVII., XVIII., and so forth — on a salmon-coloured, gleaming side. It tilted forward and downward with a heart-stilling "Ssssooo"; the ladder disappeared; a line of brass-rimmed port-holes flashed past; a jet of steam puffed in Harvey's helplessly uplifted hands; a spout of hot water roared along the rail of the *We're Here*, and the little schooner staggered and shook in a rush of screw-torn water, as a liner's stern vanished in the fog. Harvey got ready to faint or be sick, or both, when he heard a crack like a trunk thrown on a sidewalk, and, all small in his ear, a far-away telephone voice drawling: "Heave to! You've sunk us!"

"Is it us?" he gasped.

"No! Boat out yonder. Ring! We're goin' to look," said Dan, running out a dory.

In half a minute all except Harvey, Penn, and the cook were overside and away. Presently a schooner's stump-foremast, snapped clean across, drifted past the bows. Then an empty green dory came by, knocking on the *We're Here's* side, as though she wished to be taken in. Then fol-

lowed something, face down, in a blue jersey, but — it was not the whole of a man. Penn changed colour and caught his breath with a click. Harvey pounded despairingly at the bell, for he feared they might be sunk at any minute, and he jumped at Dan's hail as the crew came back.

"The *Jennie Cushman*," said Dan, hysterically, "cut clean in half — graound up an' trompled on at that! Not a quarter of a mile away Dad's got the old man. There ain't any one else, and— there was his son, too. Oh, Harve, Harve, I can't stand it! I've seen—" He dropped his head on his arms and sobbed while the others dragged a grey-headed man aboard.

"What did you pick me up for?" the stranger groaned. "Disko, what did you pick me up for?"

Disko dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder, for the man's eyes were wild and his lips trembled as he stared at the silent crew. Then up and spoke Pennsylvania Pratt, who was also Haskins or Rich or McVitty when Uncle Salters forgot; and his face was changed on him from the face of a fool to the countenance of an old, wise man, and he said in a strong voice: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord! I was — I am a minister of the Gospel. Leave him to me."

"Oh, you be, be you?" said the man. "Then pray my son back to me! Pray back a nine-

thousand-dollar boat an' a thousand quintal of fish. If you'd left me alone my widow could ha' gone on to the Provident an' worked fer her board, an' never known — an' never known. Now I'll hev to tell her."

"There ain't nothin' to say," said Disko. "Better lie down a piece, Jason Olley."

When a man has lost his only son, his summer's work, and his means of livelihood, in thirty counted seconds, it is hard to give consolation.

"All Gloucester men, wasn't they," said Tom Platt, fiddling helplessly with a dory-becket.

"Oh, *that* don't make no odds," said Jason, wringing the wet from his beard. "I'll be rowin' summer boarders araound East Gloucester this fall." He rolled heavily to the rail, singing.

> "Happy birds that sing and fly
> Round thine altars, O Most High!"

"Come with me. Come below!" said Penn, as though he had a right to give orders. Their eyes met and fought for a quarter of a minute.

"I dunno who you be, but I'll come," said Jason, submissively. "Mebbe I'll get back some o' the — some o' the — nine thousand dollars." Penn led him into the cabin and slid the door behind.

"That ain't Penn," cried Uncle Salters. "It's

Jacob Boller, an' — he's remembered Johnstown! I never seed such eyes in any livin' man's head. What's to do naow? What'll I do naow?"

They could hear Penn's voice and Jason's together. Then Penn's went on alone, and Salters slipped off his hat, for Penn was praying. Presently the little man came up the steps, huge drops of sweat on his face, and looked at the crew. Dan was still sobbing by the wheel.

"He don't know us," Salters groaned. "It's all to do over again, checkers and everything — an' what'll he say to *me?*"

Penn spoke; they could hear that it was to strangers. "I have prayed," said he. "Our people believe in prayer. I have prayed for the life of this man's son. Mine were drowned before my eyes — she and my eldest and — the others. Shall a man be more wise than his Maker? I prayed never for their lives, but I have prayed for this man's son, and he will surely be sent him."

Salters looked pleadingly at Penn to see if he remembered.

"How long have I been mad?" Penn asked suddenly. His mouth was twitching.

"Pshaw, Penn! You weren't never mad," Salters began. "Only a little distracted like."

"I saw the houses strike the bridge before the fires broke out. I do not remember any more. How long ago is that?"

"I can't stand it! I can't stand it!" cried Dan, and Harvey whimpered in sympathy.

"Abaout five year," said Disko, in a shaking voice.

"Then I have been a charge on some one for every day of that time. Who was the man?"

Disko pointed to Salters.

"Ye hain't — ye hain't!" cried the sea-farmer, twisting his hands together. "Ye've more'n earned your keep twice-told; "an' there's money owin' you, Penn, besides ha'af o' my quarter-share in the boat, which is yours fer value received."

"You are good men. I can see that in your faces. But — "

"Mother av Mercy," whispered Long Jack, "an' he's been wid us all these trips! He's clean bewitched."

A schooner's bell struck up alongside, and a voice hailed through the fog: "O Disko! 'Heard abaout the *Jennie Cushman?*"

"They have found his son," cried Penn. "Stand you still and see the salvation of the Lord!"

"Got Jason aboard here," Disko answered, but his voice quavered. "There — warn't any one else?"

"We've f'und one, though. 'Run acrost him snarled up in a mess o' lumber thet might ha' bin a fo'c'sle. His head's cut some."

"Who is he?"

The *We're Heres'* heart-beats answered one another.

"Guess it's young Olley," the voice drawled.

Penn raised his hands and said something in German. Harvey could have sworn that a bright sun was shining upon his lifted face; but the drawl went on: "Sa-ay! You fellers guyed us consid'rable t'other night."

"We don't feel like guyin' any now," said Disko.

"I know it; but to tell the honest truth we was kinder — kinder driftin' when we run ag'in' young Olley."

It was the irrepressible *Carrie Pitman*, and a roar of unsteady laughter went up from the deck of the *We're Here*.

"Hedn't you 'baout's well send the old man aboard? We're runnin' in fer more bait an' graound-tackle. 'Guess you won't want him, anyway, an' this blame windlass work makes us short-handed. We'll take care of him. He married my woman's aunt."

"I'll give you anything in the boat," said Troop.

"Don't want nothin', 'less, mebbe, an anchor that'll hold. Say! Young Olley's gittin' kinder baulky an' excited. Send the old man along."

Penn waked him from his stupor of despair,

and Tom Platt rowed him over. He went away without a word of thanks, not knowing what was to come; and the fog closed over all.

"And now," said Penn, drawing a deep breath as though about to preach. "And now"— the erect body sank like a sword driven home into the scabbard; the light faded from the overbright eyes; the voice returned to its usual pitiful little titter —"and now," said Pennsylvania Pratt, "do you think it's too early for a little game of checkers, Mr. Salters?"

"The very thing — the very thing I was goin' to say myself," cried Salters, promptly. "It beats all, Penn, how you git on to what's in a man's mind."

The little fellow blushed and meekly followed Salters forward.

"Up anchor! Hurry! Let's quit these crazy waters," shouted Disko, and never was he more swiftly obeyed.

"Now what in creation d'ye suppose is the meanin' o' that all?" said Long Jack, when they were working through the fog once more, damp, dripping, and bewildered.

"The way I sense it," said Disko, at the wheel, "is this: The *Jennie Cushman* business comin' on an empty stummick ——"

"He — we saw one of them go by," sobbed Harvey.

"An' *that*, o' course, kinder hove him outer water, julluk runnin' a craft ashore; hove him right aout, I take it, to rememberin' Johnstown an' Jacob Boller an' such-like reminiscences. Well, consolin' Jason there held him up a piece, same's shorin' up a boat. Then, bein' weak, them props slipped an' slipped, an' he slided down the ways, an' naow he's water-borne ag'in. That's haow *I* sense it."

They decided that Disko was entirely correct.

"'Twould ha' bruk Salters all up," said Long Jack, "if Penn had stayed Jacob Bollerin'. Did ye see his face when Penn asked who he'd been charged on all these years? How is ut, Salters?"

"Asleep — dead asleep. Turned in like a child," Salters replied, tiptoeing aft. "There won't be no grub till he wakes, natural. Did ye ever see sech a gift in prayer? He everlastin'ly hiked young Olley outer the ocean. Thet's my belief. Jason was tur'ble praoud of his boy, an' I mistrusted all along 'twas a jedgment on worshippin' vain idols."

"There's others jest as sot," said Disko.

"That's dif'runt," Salters retorted quickly. "Penn's not all caulked, an' I ain't only but doin' my duty by him."

They waited, those hungry men, three hours, till Penn reappeared with a smooth face and a blank mind. He said he believed that he had

been dreaming. Then he wanted to know why they were so silent, and they could not tell him.

Disko worked all hands mercilessly for the next three or four days; and when they could not go out, turned them into the hold to stack the ship's stores into smaller compass, to make more room for the fish. The packed mass ran from the cabin partition to the sliding door behind the fo'c'sle stove; and Disko showed how there is great art in stowing cargo so as to bring a schooner to her best draft. The crew were thus kept lively till they recovered their spirits; and Harvey was tickled with a rope's end by Long Jack for being, as the Galway man said, "sorrowful as a sick cat over fwhat couldn't be helped." He did a great deal of thinking in those dreary days; and told Dan what he thought, and Dan agreed with him — even to the extent of asking for fried pies instead of hooking them.

But a week later the two nearly upset the *Hattie S.* in a wild attempt to stab a shark with an old bayonet tied to a stick. The grim brute rubbed alongside the dory begging for small fish, and between the three of them it was a mercy they all got off alive.

At last, after playing blindman's-buff in the fog, there came a morning when Disko shouted down the fo'c'sle: "Hurry, boys! We're in taown!"

CHAPTER VIII

To the end of his days, Harvey will never forget that sight. The sun was just clear of the horizon they had not seen for nearly a week, and his low red light struck into the riding-sails of three fleets of anchored schooners — one to the north, one to the westward, and one to the south. There must have been nearly a hundred of them, of every possible make and build, with, far away, a square-rigged Frenchman, all bowing and courtesying one to the other. From every boat dories were dropping away like bees from a crowded hive; and the clamour of voices, the rattling of ropes and blocks, and the splash of the oars carried for miles across the heaving water. The sails turned all colours, black, pearly-grey, and white, as the sun mounted; and more boats swung up through the mists to the southward.

The dories gathered in clusters, separated, reformed, and broke again, all heading one way; while men hailed and whistled and cat-called and sang, and the water was speckled with rubbish thrown overboard.

"It's a town," said Harvey. "Disko was right. It *is* a town!"

"I've seen smaller," said Disko. "There's about a thousand men here; an' yonder's the Virgin." He pointed to a vacant space of greenish sea, where there were no dories.

The *We're Here* skirted round the northern squadron, Disko waving his hand to friend after friend, and anchored as neatly as a racing yacht at the end of the season. The Bank fleet pass good seamanship in silence; but a bungler is jeered all along the line.

"Jest in time fer the caplin," cried the *Mary Chilton.*

"'Salt 'most wet?" asked the *King Philip.*

"Hey, Tom Platt! Come t' supper to-night?" said the *Henry Clay;* and so questions and answers flew back and forth. Men had met one another before, dory-fishing in the fog, and there is no place for gossip like the Bank fleet. They all seemed to know about Harvey's rescue, and asked if he were worth his salt yet. The young bloods jested with Dan, who had a lively tongue of his own, and inquired after their health by the town-nicknames they least liked. Manuel's countrymen jabbered at him in their own language; and even the silent cook was seen riding the jib-boom and shouting Gaelic to a friend as black as himself. After they had buoyed the cable — all

around the Virgin is rocky bottom, and carelessness means chafed ground-tackle and danger from drifting — after they had buoyed the cable, their dories went forth to join the mob of boats anchored about a mile away. The schooners rocked and dipped at a safe distance, like mother ducks watching their brood, while the dories behaved like mannerless ducklings.

As they drove into the confusion, boat banging boat, Harvey's ears tingled at the comments on his rowing. Every dialect from Labrador to Long Island, with Portuguese, Neapolitan, Lingua Franca, French, and Gaelic, with songs and shoutings and new oaths, rattled round him, and he seemed to be the butt of it all. For the first time in his life he felt shy — perhaps that came from living so long with only the *We're Heres* — among the scores of wild faces that rose and fell with the reeling small craft. A gentle, breathing swell, three furlongs from trough to barrel, would quietly shoulder up a string of variously painted dories. They hung for an instant, a wonderful frieze against the sky-line, and their men pointed and hailed. Next moment the open mouths, waving arms, and bare chests disappeared, while on another swell came up an entirely new line of characters like paper figures in a toy theatre. So Harvey stared. "Watch out!" said Dan, flourishing a dip-net. "When I tell you dip, you

dip. The caplin'll school any time from naow on. Where'll we lay, Tom Platt?"

Pushing, shoving, and hauling, greeting old friends here and warning old enemies there, Commodore Tom Platt led his little fleet well to leeward of the general crowd, and immediately three or four men began to haul on their anchors with intent to lee-bow the *We're Heres*. But a yell of laughter went up as a dory shot from her station with exceeding speed, its occupant pulling madly on the roding.

"Give her slack!" roared twenty voices. "Let him shake it out."

"What's the matter?" said Harvey, as the boat flashed away to the southward. "He's anchored, isn't he?"

"Anchored, sure enough, but his graound-tackle's kinder shifty," said Dan, laughing "Whale's fouled it. . . . Dip, Harve! Here they come!"

The sea round them clouded and darkened, and then frizzed up in showers of tiny silver fish, and over a space of five or six acres the cod began to leap like trout in May; while behind the cod three or four broad grey-black backs broke the water into boils.

Then everybody shouted and tried to haul up his anchor to get among the school, and fouled his neighbour's line and said what was in his heart,

and dipped furiously with his dip-net, and shrieked cautions and advice to his companions, while the deep fizzed like freshly opened soda-water, and cod, men, and whales together flung in upon the luckless bait. Harvey was nearly knocked overboard by the handle of Dan's net. But in all the wild tumult he noticed, and never forgot, the wicked, set little eye — something like a circus elephant's eye — of a whale that drove along almost level with the water, and, so he said, winked at him. Three boats found their rodings fouled by these reckless mid-sea hunters, and were towed half a mile ere their horses shook the line free.

Then the caplin moved off, and five minutes later there was no sound except the splash of the sinkers overside, the flapping of the cod, and the whack of the muckles as the men stunned them. It was wonderful fishing. Harvey could see the glimmering cod below, swimming slowly in droves, biting as steadily as they swam. Bank law strictly forbids more than one hook on one line when the dories are on the Virgin or the Eastern Shoals; but so close lay the boats that even single hooks snarled, and Harvey found himself in hot argument with a gentle, hairy Newfoundlander on one side and a howling Portuguese on the other.

Worse than any tangle of fishing-lines was the

confusion of the dory-rodings below water. Each man had anchored where it seemed good to him, drifting and rowing round his fixed point. As the fish struck on less quickly, each man wanted to haul up and get to better ground; but every third man found himself intimately connected with some four or five neighbours. To cut another's roding is crime unspeakable on the Banks; yet it was done, and done without detection, three or four times that day. Tom Platt caught a Maine man in the black act and knocked him over the gunwale with an oar, and Manuel served a fellow-countryman in the same way. But Harvey's anchor-line was cut, and so was Penn's, and they were turned into relief-boats to carry fish to the *We're Here* as the dories filled. The caplin schooled once more at twilight, when the mad clamour was repeated; and at dusk they rowed back to dress down by the light of kerosene-lamps on the edge of the pen.

It was a huge pile, and they went to sleep while they were dressing. Next day several boats fished right above the cap of the Virgin; and Harvey, with them, looked down on the very weed of that lonely rock, which rises to within twenty feet of the surface. The cod were there in legions, marching solemnly over the leathery kelp. When they bit, they bit all together; and so when they stopped. There was a slack time at noon, and

the dories began to search for amusement. It was Dan who sighted the *Hope of Prague* just coming up, and as her boats joined the company they were greeted with the question: "Who's the meanest man in the Fleet?"

Three hundred voices answered cheerily: "Nick Bra-ady." It sounded like an organ chant

"Who stole the lamp-wicks?" That was Dan's contribution.

"Nick Bra-ady," sang the boats.

"Who biled the salt bait fer soup?" This was an unknown backbiter a quarter of a mile away.

Again the joyful chorus. Now, Brady was not especially mean, but he had that reputation, and the Fleet made the most of it. Then they discovered a man from a Truro boat who, six years before, had been convicted of using a tackle with five or six hooks — a "scrowger," they call it — on the Shoals. Naturally, he had been christened "Scrowger Jim"; and though he had hidden himself on the Georges ever since, he found his honours waiting for him full blown. They took it up in a sort of fire-cracker chorus: "Jim! O Jim! Jim! *O* Jim! Sssscrowger Jim!" That pleased everybody. And when a poetical Beverly man — he had been making it up all day, and talked about it for weeks — sang, The *Carrie Pitman's* anchor

doesn't hold her for a cent!" the dories felt that they were indeed fortunate. Then they had to ask that Beverly man how he was off for beans, because even poets must not have things all their own way. Every schooner and nearly every man got it in turn. Was there a careless or dirty cook anywhere? The dories sang about him and his food. Was a schooner badly found? The Fleet was told at full length. Had a man hooked tobacco from a messmate? He was named in meeting; the name tossed from roller to roller. Disko's infallible judgments, Long Jack's market-boat that he had sold years ago, Dan's sweetheart (oh, but Dan was an angry boy!), Penn's bad luck with dory-anchors, Salters's views on manure, Manuel's little slips from virtue ashore, and Harvey's ladylike handling of the oar — all were laid before the public; and as the fog fell around them in silvery sheets beneath the sun, the voices sounded like a bench of invisible judges pronouncing sentence.

The dories roved and fished and squabbled till a swell underran the sea. Then they drew more apart to save their sides, and some one called that if the swell continued the Virgin would break. A reckless Galway man with his nephew denied this, hauled up anchor, and rowed over the very rock itself. Many voices called them to come away, while others dared them to hold on. As

the smooth-backed rollers passed to the southward, they hove the dory high and high into the mist, and dropped her in ugly, sucking, dimpled water, where she spun round her anchor, within a foot or two of the hidden rock. It was playing with death for mere bravado; and the boats looked on in uneasy silence till Long Jack rowed up behind his countrymen and quietly cut their roding.

"Can't ye hear ut knockin'?" he cried. "Pull for your miserable lives! Pull!"

The men swore and tried to argue as the boat drifted; but the next swell checked a little, like a man tripping on a carpet. There was a deep sob and a gathering roar, and the Virgin flung up a couple of acres of foaming water, white, furious, and ghastly over the shoal sea. Then all the boats greatly applauded Long Jack, and the Galway men held their tongue.

"Ain't it elegant?" said Dan, bobbing like a young seal at home. "She'll break about once every ha'af hour now, 'less the swell piles up good. What's her reg'lar time when she's at work, Tom Platt?"

"Once ivry fifteen minutes, to the tick. Harve, you've seen the greatest thing on the Banks; an' but for Long Jack you'd seen some dead men too."

There came a sound of merriment where the fog lay thicker and the schooners were ringing

their bells A big bark nosed cautiously out of the mist, and was received with shouts and cries of, "Come along, darlin'," from the Irishry.

"Another Frenchman?" said Harvey.

"Hain't you eyes? She's a Baltimore boat; goin' in fear an' tremblin'," said Dan. "We'll guy the very sticks out of her. 'Guess it's the fust time her skipper ever met up with the Fleet this way."

She was a black, buxom, eight-hundred-ton craft. Her mainsail was looped up, and her topsail flapped undecidedly in what little wind was moving. Now a bark is feminine beyond all other daughters of the sea, and this tall, hesitating creature, with her white and gilt figurehead, looked just like a bewildered woman half lifting her skirts to cross a muddy street under the jeers of bad little boys. That was very much her situation. She knew she was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Virgin, had caught the roar of it, and was, therefore, asking her way. This is a small part of what she heard from the dancing dories:

"The Virgin? Fwhat are you talkin' of? This is Le Have on a Sunday mornin'. Go home an' sober up."

"Go home, ye tarrapin! Go home an' tell 'em we're comin'."

Half a dozen voices together, in a most tuneful

chorus, as her stern went down with a roll and a bubble into the troughs: "Thay-aah — she — strikes!"

"Hard up! Hard up fer your life! You're on top of her now."

"Daown! Hard daown! Let go everything!"

"All hands to the pumps!"

"Daown jib an' pole her!"

Here the skipper lost his temper and said things. Instantly fishing was suspended to answer him, and he heard many curious facts about his boat and her next port of call. They asked him if he were insured; and whence he had stolen his anchor, because, they said, it belonged to the *Carrie Pitman;* they called his boat a mud-scow, and accused him of dumping garbage to frighten the fish; they offered to tow him and charge it to his wife; and one audacious youth slipped almost under the counter, smacked it with his open palm, and yelled: "Gid up, Buck!"

The cook emptied a pan of ashes on him, and he replied with cod-heads. The bark's crew fired small coal from the galley, and the dories threatened to come aboard and "razee" her. They would have warned her at once had she been in real peril; but, seeing her well clear of the Virgin, they made the most of their chances. The fun was spoilt when the rock spoke again, a half-

mile to windward, and the tormented bark set everything that would draw and went her ways; but the dories felt that the honours lay with them.

All that night the Virgin roared hoarsely; and next morning, over an angry, white-headed sea, Harvey saw the Fleet with flickering masts waiting for a lead. Not a dory was hove out till ten o'clock, when the two Jeraulds of the *Day's Eye*, imagining a lull which did not exist, set the example. In a minute half the boats were out and bobbing in the cockly swells, but Troop kept the *We're Heres* at work dressing-down. He saw no sense in "dares"; and as the storm grew that evening they had the pleasure of receiving wet strangers only too glad to make any refuge in the gale. The boys stood by the dory-tackles with lanterns, the men ready to haul, one eye cocked for the sweeping wave that would make them drop everything and hold on for the dear life. Out of the dark would come a yell of "Dory, dory!" They would hook up and haul in a drenched man and a half-sunk boat, till their decks were littered down with nests of dories and the bunks were full. Five times in their watch did Harvey, with Dan, jump at the foregaff where it lay lashed on the boom, and cling with arms, legs, and teeth to rope and spar and sodden canvas as

a big wave filled the decks. One dory was smashed to pieces, and the sea pitched the man head first on to the decks, cutting his forehead open; and about dawn, when the racing seas glimmered white all along their cold edges, another man, blue and ghastly, crawled in with a broken hand, asking news of his brother. Seven extra mouths sat down to breakfast: a Swede; a Chatham skipper; a boy from Hancock, Maine; one Duxbury, and three Provincetown men.

There was a general sorting out among the Fleet next day; and though no one said anything, all ate with better appetites when boat after boat reported full crews aboard. Only a couple of Portuguese and an old man from Gloucester were drowned, but many were cut or bruised; and two schooners had parted their tackle and been blown to the southward, three days' sail. A man died on a Frenchman — it was the same bark that had traded tobacco with the *We're Heres*. She slipped away quite quietly one wet, white morning, moved to a patch of deep water, her sails all hanging anyhow, and Harvey saw the funeral through Disko's spy-glass. It was only an oblong bundle slid overside. They did not seem to have any form of service, but in the night, at anchor, Harvey heard them across the star-powdered black water, singing something that sounded like a hymn. It went to a very slow tune.

La brigantine
Qui va tourner,
Roule et s'incline
Pour m'entrainer.
Oh, Vierge Marie,
Pour moi priez Dieu!
Adieu, patrie;
Québec, adieu!

Tom Platt visited her, because, he said, the dead man was his brother as a Freemason. It came out that a wave had doubled the poor fellow over the heel of the bowsprit and broken his back. The news spread like a flash, for, contrary to general custom, the Frenchman held an auction of the dead man's kit,— he had no friends at St. Malo or Miquelon,— and everything was spread out on the top of the house, from his red knitted cap to the leather belt with the sheath-knife at the back. Dan and Harvey were out on twenty-fathom water in the *Hattie S.*, and naturally rowed over to join the crowd. It was a long pull, and they stayed some little time while Dan bought the knife, which had a curious brass handle. When they dropped overside and pushed off into a drizzle of rain and a lop of sea, it occurred to them that they might get into trouble for neglecting the lines.

"'Guess 'twon't hurt us any to be warmed up," said Dan, shivering under his oilskins, and they

rowed on into the heart of a white fog, which, as usual, dropped on them without warning.

"There's too much blame tide hereabouts to trust to your instinks," he said. "Heave over the anchor, Harve, and we'll fish a piece till the thing lifts. Bend on your biggest lead. Three pound ain't any too much in this water. See how she's tightened on her rodin' already."

There was quite a little bubble at the bows, where some irresponsible Bank current held the dory full stretch on her rope; but they could not see a boat's length in any direction. Harvey turned up his collar and bunched himself over his reel with the air of a wearied navigator. Fog had no special terrors for him now. They fished awhile in silence, and found the cod struck on well. Then Dan drew the sheath-knife and tested the edge of it on the gunwale.

"That's a daisy," said Harvey. "How did you get it so cheap?"

"On account o' their blame Cath'lic superstitions," said Dan, jabbing with the bright blade. "They don't fancy takin' iron frum off of a dead man, so to speak. 'See them Arichat Frenchmen step back when I bid?"

"But an auction ain't taking anything off a dead man. It's business."

"*We* know it ain't, but there's no goin' in the teeth o' superstition. That's one o' the advan-

tages o' livin' in a progressive country." And Dan began whistling:

> "Oh, Double Thatcher, how are you?
> Now Eastern Point comes inter view.
> The girls an' boys we soon shall see,
> At anchor off Cape Ann!"

"Why didn't that Eastport man bid, then? He bought his boots. Ain't Maine progressive?"

"Maine? Pshaw! They don't know enough, or they hain't got money enough, to paint their haouses in Maine. I've seen 'em. The Eastport man he told me that the knife had been used — so the French captain told him — used up on the French coast last year."

"Cut a man? Heave's the muckle." Harvey hauled in his fish, rebaited, and threw over.

"Killed him! 'Course, when I heard *that* I was keener 'n ever to get it."

"Christmas! I didn't know it," said Harvey, turning round. "I'll give you a dollar for it when I — get my wages. Say, I'll give you two dollars."

"Honest? D'you like it as much as all that?" said Dan, flushing. "Well, to tell the truth, I kinder got it for you — to give; but I didn't let on till I saw how you'd take it. It's yours and welcome, Harve, because we're dory-mates, and so on and so forth, an' so followin'. Catch a-holt!"

He held it out, belt and all.

"But look at here. Dan, I don't see —"

"Take it. 'Tain't no use to me. I wish you to hev it."

The temptation was irresistible. "Dan, you're a white man," said Harvey. "I'll keep it as long as I live."

"That's good hearin'," said Dan, with a pleasant laugh; and then, anxious to change the subject: "'Look's if your line was fast to somethin'."

"Fouled, I guess," said Harve, tugging. Before he pulled up he fastened the belt round him, and with deep delight heard the tip of the sheath click on the thwart. "Concern the thing!" he cried. "She acts as though she were on strawberry-bottom. It's all sand here, ain't it?"

Dan reached over and gave a judgmatic tweak. "Holibut 'll act that way 'f he's sulky. Thet's no strawberry-bottom. Yank her once or twice. She gives, sure. 'Guess we'd better haul up an' make certain."

They pulled together, making fast at each turn on the cleats, and the hidden weight rose sluggishly.

"Prize, oh! Haul!" shouted Dan, but the shout ended in a shrill, double shriek of horror, for out of the sea came — the body of the dead Frenchman buried two days before! The hook had caught him under the right armpit, and he swayed, erect and horrible, head and shoulders

above water. His arms were tied to his side, and —he had no face. The boys fell over each other in a heap at the bottom of the dory, and there they lay while the thing bobbed alongside, held on the shortened line.

"The tide — the tide brought him!" said Harvey, with quivering lips, as he fumbled at the clasp of the belt.

"Oh, Lord! Oh, Harve!" groaned Dan, "be quick. He's come for it. Let him have it. Take it off."

"I don't want it! *I* don't want it!" cried Harvey. "I can't find the bu-buckle."

"Quick, Harve! He's on your line!"

Harvey sat up to unfasten the belt, facing the head that had no face under its streaming hair. "He's fast still," he whispered to Dan, who slipped out his knife and cut the line, as Harvey flung the belt far overside. The body shot down with a plop, and Dan cautiously rose to his knees, whiter than the fog.

"He come for it. He come for it. I've seen a stale one hauled up on a trawl and I didn't much care, but *he* come to us special."

"I wish — I wish I hadn't taken the knife. Then he'd have come on *your* line."

"Dunno as thet would ha' made any differ. We're both scared out o' ten years' growth. Oh, Harve, did ye see his head?"

"Did I? I'll never forget it. But look at here, Dan; it couldn't have been *meant.* It was only the tide."

"Tide! He come for it, Harve. Why, they sunk him six mile to south'ard o' the Fleet, an' we're two miles from where she's lyin' now. They told me he was weighted with a fathom an' a half o' chain-cable."

"'Wonder what he did with the knife — up on the French coast?"

"Something bad. 'Guess he's bound to take it with him to the Judgment, an' so — What are you doin' with the fish?"

"Heaving 'em overboard," said Harvey.

"What for? *We* sha'n't eat 'em."

"I don't care. I had to look at his face while I was takin' the belt off. You can keep your catch if you like. I've no use for mine."

Dan said nothing, but threw his fish over again.

"'Guess it's best to be on the safe side," he murmured at last. "I'd give a month's pay if this fog 'u'd lift. Things go abaout in a fog that ye don't see in clear weather — yo-hoes an' hollerers and such like. I'm sorter relieved he come the way he did instid o' walkin'. He might ha' walked."

"Do-on't, Dan! We're right on top of him now. 'Wish I was safe aboard, bein' pounded by Uncle Salters."

"They'll be lookin' fer us in a little. Gimme the tooter." Dan took the tin dinner-horn, but paused before he blew.

"Go on," said Harvey. "I don't want to stay here all night."

"Question is, haow *he'd* take it. There was a man frum down the coast told me once he was in a schooner where they darsen't ever blow a horn to the dories, becaze the skipper — not the man he was with, but a captain that had run her five years before — he'd drownded a boy alongside in a drunk fit; an' ever after, that boy he'd row alongside too and shout, 'Dory! dory!' with the rest."

"Dory! dory!" a muffled voice cried through the fog. They cowered again, and the horn dropped from Dan's hand.

"Hold on!" cried Harvey; "it's the cook."

"Dunno what made me think o' thet fool tale, either," said Dan. "It's the doctor, sure enough."

"Dan! Danny! Oooh, Dan! Harve! Harvey! Oooh, Haarveee!"

"We're here," sung both boys together. They heard oars, but could see nothing till the cook, shining and dripping, rowed into them.

"What iss happened?" said he. "You will be beaten at home."

"Thet's what we want. Thet's what we're sufferin' for," said Dan. "Anything homey's good enough fer us. We've had kinder depressin'

company." As the cook passed them a line, Dan told him the tale.

"Yess! He come for hiss knife," was all he said at the end.

Never had the little rocking *We're Here* looked so deliciously home-like as when the cook, born and bred in fogs, rowed them back to her. There was a warm glow of light from the cabin and a satisfying smell of food forward, and it was heavenly to hear Disko and the others, all quite alive and solid, leaning over the rail and promising them a first-class pounding. But the cook was a black master of strategy. He did not get the dories aboard till he had given the more striking points of the tale, explaining as he backed and bumped round the counter how Harvey was the mascot to destroy any possible bad luck. So the boys came overside as rather uncanny heroes, and every one asked them questions instead of pounding them for making trouble. Little Penn delivered quite a speech on the folly of superstitions; but public opinion was against him and in favour of Long Jack, who told the most excruciating ghost-stories to nearly midnight. Under that influence no one except Salters and Penn said anything about "idolatry" when the cook put a lighted candle, a cake of flour and water, and a pinch of salt on a shingle, and floated them out astern to keep the Frenchman quiet in case he was still restless. Dan

lit the candle because he had bought the belt, and the cook grunted and muttered charms as long as he could see the ducking point of flame.

Said Harvey to Dan, as they turned in after watch: "How about progress and Catholic superstitions?"

"Huh! I guess I'm as enlightened and progressive as the next man, but when it comes to a dead St. Malo deck-hand scarin' a couple o' pore boys stiff fer the sake of a thirty-cent knife, why, then, the cook can take hold fer all o' me. I mistrust furriners, livin' or dead."

Next morning all, except the cook, were rather ashamed of the ceremonies, and went to work double tides, speaking gruffly to one another.

The *We're Here* was racing neck and neck for her last few loads against the *Parry Norman;* and so close was the struggle that the Fleet took sides and betted tobacco. All hands worked at the lines or dressing-down till they fell asleep where they stood — beginning before dawn and ending when it was too dark to see. They even used the cook as pitcher, and turned Harvey into the hold to pass salt, while Dan helped to dress down. Luckily a *Parry Norman* man sprained his ankle falling down the fo'c'sle, and the *We're Heres* gained. Harvey could not see how one more fish could be crammed into her, but Disko and Tom Platt stowed and stowed, and planked the mass

down with big stones from the ballast, and there was always "jest another day's work." Disko did not tell them when all the salt was wetted. He rolled to the lazarette aft the cabin and began hauling out the big mainsail. This was at ten in the morning. The riding-sail was down and the main- and topsail were up by noon, and dories came alongside with letters for home, envying their good fortune. At last she cleared decks, hoisted her flag,— as is the right of the first boat off the Banks,— up-anchored, and began to move. Disko pretended that he wished to accommodate folk who had not sent in their mail, and so worked her gracefully in and out among the schooners. In reality, that was his little triumphant procession, and for the fifth year running it showed what kind of mariner he was. Dan's accordion and Tom Platt's fiddle supplied the music of the magic verse you must not sing till all the salt is wet:

"Hih! Yih! Yoho! Send your letters raound!
All our salt is wetted, an' the anchor's off the graound!
Bend, oh, bend your mains'l, we're back to Yankeeland—
With fifteen hunder' quintal,
An' fifteen hunder' quintal,
'Teen hunder' toppin' quintal,
'Twix' old 'Queereau an' Grand."

The last letters pitched on deck wrapped round pieces of coal, and the Gloucester men

shouted messages to their wives and womenfolk and owners, while the *We're Here* finished the musical ride through the Fleet, her head-sails quivering like a man's hand when he raises it to say good-bye.

Harvey very soon discovered that the *We're Here*, with her riding-sail, strolling from berth to berth, and the *We're Here* headed west by south under home canvas, were two very different boats There was a bite and kick to the wheel even in "boy's" weather; he could feel the dead weight in the hold flung forward mightily across the surges, and the streaming line of bubbles overside made his eyes dizzy.

Disko kept them busy fiddling with the sails; and when those were flattened like a racing yacht's, Dan had to wait on the big topsail, which was put over by hand every time she went about. In spare moments they pumped, for the packed fish dripped brine, which does not improve a cargo. But since there was no fishing, Harvey had time to look at the sea from another point of view. The low-sided schooner was naturally on most intimate terms with her surroundings. They saw little of the horizon save when she topped a swell; and usually she was elbowing, fidgeting, and coaxing her steadfast way through grey, grey-blue, or black hollows laced across and across with streaks of shivering foam; or rub-

bing herself caressingly along the flank of some bigger water-hill. It was as if she said: "You wouldn't hurt me, surely? I'm only the little *We're Here*." Then she would slide away chuckling softly to herself till she was brought up by some fresh obstacle. The dullest of folk cannot see this kind of thing hour after hour through long days without noticing it; and Harvey, being anything but dull, began to comprehend and enjoy the dry chorus of wave-tops turning over with a sound of incessant tearing; the hurry of the winds working across open spaces and herding the purple-blue cloud-shadows; the splendid upheaval of the red sunrise; the folding and packing away of the morning mists, wall after wall withdrawn across the white floors; the salty glare and blaze of noon; the kiss of rain falling over thousands of dead, flat square miles; the chilly blackening of everything at the day's end; and the million wrinkles of the sea under the moonlight, when the jib-boom solemnly poked at the low stars, and Harvey went down to get a doughnut from the cook.

But the best fun was when the boys were put on the wheel together, Tom Platt within hail, and she cuddled her lee-rail down to the crashing blue, and kept a little home-made rainbow arching unbroken over her windlass. Then the jaws of the booms whined against the masts, and the

sheets creaked, and the sails filled with roaring; and when she slid into a hollow she trampled like a woman tripped in her own silk dress, and came out, her jib wet half-way up, yearning and peering for the tall twin-lights of Thatcher's Island.

They left the cold grey of the Bank sea, saw the lumber-ships making for Quebec by the Straits of St. Lawrence, with the Jersey salt-brigs from Spain and Sicily; found a friendly northeaster off Artimon Bank that drove them within view of the East light of Sable Island,—a sight Disko did not linger over,—and stayed with them past Western and Le Have, to the northern fringe of George's. From there they picked up the deeper water, and let her go merrily.

"Hattie's pulling on the string," Dan confided to Harvey. "Hattie an' ma. Next Sunday you'll be hirin' a boy to throw water on the windows to make ye go to sleep. 'Guess you'll keep with us till your folks come. Do you know the best of gettin' ashore again?"

"Hot bath?" said Harvey. His eyebrows were all white with dried spray.

"That's good, but a night-shirt's better. I've been dreamin' o' night-shirts ever since we bent our mainsail. Ye can wiggle your toes then. Ma'll hev a new one fer me, all washed soft. It's home, Harve. It's home! Ye can sense it in the air. We're runnin' into the aidge of a hot

wave naow, an' I can smell the bayberries. Wonder if we'll get in fer supper. Port a trifle."

The hesitating sails flapped and lurched in the close air as the deep smoothed out, blue and oily, round them. When they whistled for a wind only the rain came in spiky rods, bubbling and drumming, and behind the rain the thunder and the lightning of mid-August. They lay on the deck with bare feet and arms, telling one another what they would order at their first meal ashore; for now the land was in plain sight. A Gloucester swordfish-boat drifted alongside, a man in the little pulpit on the bowsprit flourishing his harpoon, his bare head plastered down with the wet. "And all's well!" he sang cheerily, as though he were watch on a big liner. "Wouverman's waiting fer you, Disko. What's the news o' the Fleet?"

Disko shouted it and passed on, while the wild summer storm pounded overhead and the lightning flickered along the capes from four different quarters at once. It gave the low circle of hills round Gloucester Harbour, Ten Pound Island, the fish-sheds, with the broken line of house-roofs, and each spar and buoy on the water, in blinding photographs that came and went a dozen times to the minute as the *We're Here* crawled in on half-flood, and the whistling-buoy moaned and mourned behind her. Then the storm died out

in long, separated, vicious dags of blue-white flame, followed by a single roar like the roar of a mortar-battery, and the shaken air tingled under the stars as it got back to silence.

"The flag, the flag!" said Disko, suddenly, pointing upward.

"What is ut?" said Long Jack.

"Otto! Ha'af mast. They can see us frum shore now."

"I'd clean forgot. He's no folk to Gloucester, has he?"

"Girl he was goin' to be married to this fall."

"Mary pity her!" said Long Jack, and lowered the little flag half-mast for the sake of Otto, swept overboard in a gale off Le Have three months before.

Disko wiped the wet from his eyes and led the *We're Here* to Wouverman's wharf, giving his orders in whispers, while she swung round moored tugs and night-watchmen hailed her from the ends of inky-black piers. Over and above the darkness and the mystery of the procession, Harvey could feel the land close round him once more, with all its thousands of people asleep, and the smell of earth after rain, and the familiar noise of a switching-engine coughing to herself in a freight-yard; and all those things made his heart beat and his throat dry up as he stood by the foresheet. They heard the

anchor-watch snoring on a lighthouse-tug, nosed into a pocket of darkness where a lantern glimmered on either side; somebody waked with a grunt, threw them a rope, and they made fast to a silent wharf flanked with great iron-roofed sheds full of warm emptiness, and lay there without a sound.

Then Harvey sat down by the wheel, and sobbed and sobbed as though his heart would break, and a tall woman who had been sitting on a weigh-scale dropped down into the schooner and kissed Dan once on the cheek; for she was his mother, and she had seen the *We're Here* by the lightning-flashes. She took no notice of Harvey till he had recovered himself a little and Disko had told her his story. Then they went to Disko's house together as the dawn was breaking; and until the telegraph office was open and he could wire to his folk, Harvey Cheyne was perhaps the loneliest boy in all America. But the curious thing was that Disko and Dan seemed to think none the worse of him for crying.

Wouverman was not ready for Disko's prices till Disko, sure that the *We're Here* was at least a week ahead of any other Gloucester boat, had given him a few days to swallow them; so all hands played about the streets, and Long Jack stopped the Rocky Neck trolley, on principle, as he said, till the conductor let him ride free. But

Dan went about with his freckled nose in the air, bungful of mystery and most haughty to his family.

"Dan, I'll hev to lay inter you ef you act this way," said Troop, pensively. "Sence we've come ashore this time you've bin a heap too fresh."

"I'd lay into him naow ef he was mine," said Uncle Salters, sourly. He and Penn boarded with the Troops.

"Oho!" said Dan, shuffling with the accordion round the back-yard, ready to leap the fence if the enemy advanced. "Dad, you're welcome to your own jedgment, but remember I've warned ye. Your own flesh an' blood ha' warned ye! 'Tain't any o' *my* fault ef you're mistook, but I'll be on deck to watch ye. An' ez fer *yeou*, Uncle Salters, Pharaoh's chief butler ain't in it 'longside o' you! You watch aout an' wait. You'll be ploughed under like your own blamed clover; but me — Dan Troop — I'll flourish like a green bay-tree because *I* warn't stuck on my own opinion."

Disko was smoking in all his shore dignity and a pair of beautiful carpet-slippers. "You're gettin' ez crazy as poor Harve. You two go araound gigglin' an' squinchin' an' kickin' each other under the table till there's no peace in the haouse," said he.

"There's goin' to be a heap less — fer some folks," Dan replied. "You wait an' see."

He and Harvey went out on the trolley to East Gloucester, where they tramped through the bayberry-bushes to the lighthouse, and lay down on the big red boulders and laughed themselves hungry. Harvey had shown Dan a telegram, and the two swore to keep silence till the shell burst.

"Harve's folk?" said Dan, with an unruffled face after supper. "Well, I guess they don't amount to much of anything, or we'd ha' heard frum 'em by naow. His pop keeps a kind o' store out West. Maybe he'll give you's much as five dollars, dad."

"What did I tell ye?" said Salters. "Don't sputter over your vittles, Dan."

CHAPTER IX

WHATEVER his private sorrows may be, a multi-millionaire, like any other workingman, should keep abreast of his business. Harvey Cheyne, senior, had gone East late in June to meet a woman broken down, half mad, who dreamed day and night of her son drowning in the grey seas. He had surrounded her with doctors, trained nurses, massage-women, and even faith-cure companions, but they were useless. Mrs. Cheyne lay still and moaned, or talked of her boy by the hour together to any one who would listen. Hope she had none, and who could offer it? All she needed was assurance that drowning did not hurt; and her husband watched to guard lest she should make the experiment. Of his own sorrow he spoke little — hardly realised the depth of it till he caught himself asking the calendar on his writing-desk, "What's the use of going on?"

There had always lain a pleasant notion at the back of his head that, some day, when he had rounded off everything and the boy had left college, he would take his son to his heart and lead

him into his possessions. Then that boy, he argued, as busy fathers do, would instantly become his companion, partner, and ally, and there would follow splendid years of great works carried out together — the old head backing the young fire. Now his boy was dead — lost at sea, as it might have been a Swede sailor from one of Cheyne's big tea-ships; the wife was dying, or worse; he himself was trodden down by platoons of women and doctors and maids and attendants; worried almost beyond endurance by the shift and change of her poor restless whims; hopeless, with no heart to meet his many enemies.

He had taken the wife to his raw new palace in San Diego, where she and her people occupied a wing of great price, and Cheyne, in a verandah-room, between a secretary and a typewriter, who was also a telegraphist, toiled along wearily from day to day. There was a war of rates among four Western railroads in which he was supposed to be interested; a devastating strike had developed in his lumber-camps in Oregon, and the legislature of the State of California, which has no love for its makers, was preparing open war against him.

Ordinarily he would have accepted battle ere it was offered, and have waged a pleasant and unscrupulous campaign. But now he sat limply, his soft black hat pushed forward on to his nose,

his big body shrunk inside his loose clothes, staring at his boots or the Chinese junks in the bay, and assenting absently to the secretary's questions as he opened the Saturday mail.

Cheyne was wondering how much it would cost to drop everything and pull out. He carried huge insurances, could buy himself royal annuities, and between one of his places in Colorado and a little society (that would do the wife good), say in Washington and the South Carolina islands, a man might forget plans that had come to nothing. On the other hand . . .

The click of the typewriter stopped; the girl was looking at the secretary, who had turned white.

He passed Cheyne a telegram repeated from San Francisco:

Picked up by fishing schooner We're Here *having fallen off boat great times on Banks fishing all well waiting Gloucester Mass care Disko Troop for money or orders wire what shall do and how is mama Harvey N. Cheyne.*

The father let it fall, laid his head down on the roller-top of the shut desk, and breathed heavily. The secretary ran for Mrs. Cheyne's doctor, who found Cheyne pacing to and fro.

"What—what d'you think of it? Is it pos-

sible? Is there any meaning to it? I can't quite make it out," he cried.

"I can," said the doctor. "I lose seven thousand a year — that's all." He thought of the struggling New York practice he had dropped at Cheyne's imperious bidding, and returned the telegram with a sigh.

"You mean you'd tell her? 'May be a fraud?"

"What's the motive?" said the doctor, coolly. "Detection's too certain. It's the boy sure enough."

Enter a French maid, impudently, as an indispensable one who is kept on only by large wages.

"Mrs. Cheyne she say you must come at once. She think you are seek."

The master of thirty millions bowed his head meekly and followed Suzanne; and a thin, high voice on the upper landing of the great white-wood square staircase cried: "What is it? what has happened?"

No doors could keep out the shriek that rang through the echoing house a moment later, when her husband blurted out the news.

"And that's all right," said the doctor, serenely, to the typewriter. "About the only medical statement in novels with any truth to it is that joy don't kill, Miss Kinzey."

"I know it; but we've a heap to do first."

Miss Kinzey was from Milwaukee, somewhat direct of speech; and as her fancy leaned towards the secretary, she divined there was work in hand. He was looking earnestly at the vast roller-map of America on the wall.

"Milsom, we're going right across. Private car — straight through — Boston. Fix the connections," shouted Cheyne down the staircase.

"I thought so."

The secretary turned to the typewriter, and their eyes met (out of that was born a story—nothing to do with this story). She looked inquiringly, doubtful of his resources. He signed to her to move to the Morse as a general brings brigades into action. Then he swept his hand musician-wise through his hair, regarded the ceiling, and set to work, while Miss Kinzey's white fingers called up the Continent of America.

"*K. H. Wade, Los Angeles*—The 'Constance' is at Los Angeles, isn't she, Miss Kinzey?"

"Yep." Miss Kinzey nodded between clicks as the secretary looked at his watch.

"Ready? *Send 'Constance,' private car, here, and arrange for special to leave here Sunday in time to connect with New York Limited at Sixteenth Street, Chicago, Tuesday next.*"

Click — click — click! "Couldn't you better that?"

"Not on those grades. That gives 'em sixty

hours from here to Chicago. They won't gain anything by taking a special east of that. Ready? *Also arrange with Lake Shore and Michigan Southern to take 'Constance' on New York Central and Hudson River Buffalo to Albany, and B. and A. the same Albany to Boston. Indispensable I should reach Boston Wednesday evening. Be sure nothing prevents. Have also wired Canniff, Toucey, and Barnes.* — Sign, Cheyne."

Miss Kinzey nodded, and the secretary went on.

"Now then. Canniff, Toucey, and Barnes, of course. Ready? *Canniff, Chicago. Please take my private car 'Constance' from Santa Fé at Sixteenth Street next Tuesday p. m. on N. Y. Limited through to Buffalo and deliver N. Y. C. for Albany.*— Ever bin to N' York, Miss Kinzey? We'll go some day. — Ready? *Take car Buffalo to Albany on Limited Tuesday p. m.* That's for Toucey."

"Haven't bin to Noo York, but I know *that!*" with a toss of the head.

"Beg pardon. Now, Boston and Albany, Barnes, same instructions from Albany through to Boston. Leave three-five P. M. (you needn't wire that); arrive nine-five P. M. Wednesday. That covers everything Wade will do, but it pays to shake up the managers."

"It's great," said Miss Kinzey, with a look of admiration. This was the kind of man she understood and appreciated.

"'Tisn't bad," said Milsom, modestly. "Now, any one but me would have lost thirty hours and spent a week working out the run, instead of handing him over to the Santa Fé straight through to Chicago."

"But see here, about that Noo York Limited. Chauncey Depew himself couldn't hitch his car to *her*," Miss Kinzey suggested, recovering herself.

"Yes, but this isn't Chauncey. It's Cheyne — lightning. It goes."

"Even so. Guess we'd better wire the boy. You've forgotten that, anyhow."

"I'll ask."

When he returned with the father's message bidding Harvey meet them in Boston at an appointed hour, he found Miss Kinzey laughing over the keys. Then Milsom laughed too, for the frantic clicks from Los Angeles ran: "*We want to know why — why — why? General uneasiness developed and spreading.*"

Ten minutes later Chicago appealed to Miss Kinzey in these words: "*If crime of century is maturing please warn friends in time. We are all getting to cover here.*"

This was capped by a message from Topeka (and wherein Topeka was concerned even Milsom could not guess): "*Don't shoot, Colonel. We'll come down.*"

Cheyne smiled grimly at the consternation of

his enemies when the telegrams were laid before him. "They think we're on the war-path. Tell 'em we don't feel like fighting just now, Milsom. Tell 'em what we're going for. I guess you and Miss Kinzey had better come along, though it isn't likely I shall do any business on the road. Tell 'em the truth — for once."

So the truth was told. Miss Kinzey clicked in the sentiment while the secretary added the memorable quotation, "Let us have peace," and in board-rooms two thousand miles away the representatives of sixty-three million dollars' worth of variously manipulated railroad interests breathed more freely. Cheyne was flying to meet the only son, so miraculously restored to him. The bear was seeking his cub, not the bulls. Hard men who had their knives drawn to fight for their financial lives put away the weapons and wished him God-speed, while half a dozen panic-smitten tin-pot roads perked up their heads and spoke of the wonderful things they would have done had not Cheyne buried the hatchet.

It was a busy week-end among the wires; for, now that their anxiety was removed, men and cities hastened to accommodate. Los Angeles called to San Diego and Barstow that the Southern California engineers might know and be ready in their lonely round-houses; Barstow passed the word to the Atlantic and Pacific; the Albuquerque

flung it the whole length of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé management, even into Chicago. An engine, combination-car with crew, and the great and gilded "Constance" private car were to be "expedited" over those two thousand three hundred and fifty miles. The train would take precedence of one hundred and seventy-seven others meeting and passing; despatches and crews of every one of those said trains must be notified. Sixteen locomotives, sixteen engineers, and sixteen firemen would be needed — each and every one the best available. Two and one half minutes would be allowed for changing engines, three for watering, and two for coaling. "Warn the men, and arrange tanks and chutes accordingly; for Harvey Cheyne is in a hurry, a hurry—a hurry," sang the wires. "Forty miles an hour will be expected, and division superintendents will accompany this special over their respective divisions. From San Diego to Sixteenth Street, Chicago, let the magic carpet be laid down. Hurry! oh, hurry!"

"It will be hot," said Cheyne, as they rolled out of San Diego in the dawn of Sunday. "We're going to hurry, mama, just as fast as ever we can; but I really don't think there's any good of your putting on your bonnet and gloves yet. You'd much better lie down and take your medicine. I'd play you a game o' dominoes, but it's Sunday."

"I'll be good. Oh, I *will* be good. Only — taking off my bonnet makes me feel as if we'd never get there."

"Try to sleep a little, mama, and we'll be in Chicago before you know."

"But it's Boston, father. Tell them to hurry."

The six-foot drivers were hammering their way to San Bernardino and the Mohave wastes, but this was no grade for speed. That would come later. The heat of the desert followed the heat of the hills as they turned east to the Needles and the Colorado River. The car cracked in the utter drought and glare, and they put crushed ice to Mrs. Cheyne's neck, and toiled up the long, long grades, past Ash Fork, towards Flagstaff, where the forests and quarries are, under the dry, remote skies. The needle of the speed-indicator flicked and wagged to and fro; the cinders rattled on the roof, and a whirl of dust sucked after the whirling wheels. The crew of the combination sat on their bunks, panting in their shirt-sleeves, and Cheyne found himself among them shouting old, old stories of the railroad that every trainman knows, above the roar of the car. He told them about his son, and how the sea had given up its dead, and they nodded and spat and rejoiced with him; asked after "her, back there," and whether she could stand it if the engineer "let her out a piece," and Cheyne thought she could. Accordingly, the

great fire-horse was "let out" from Flagstaff to Winslow, till a division superintendent protested.

But Mrs. Cheyne, in the boudoir state-room, where the French maid, sallow-white with fear, clung to the silver door-handle, only moaned a little and begged her husband to bid them "hurry." And so they dropped the dry sands and moon-struck rocks of Arizona behind them, and grilled on till the crash of the couplings and the wheeze of the brake-hose told them they were at Coolidge by the Continental Divide.

Three bold and experienced men — cool, confident, and dry when they began; white, quivering, and wet when they finished their trick at those terrible wheels — swung her over the great lift from Albuquerque to Glorietta and beyond Springer, up and up to the Raton Tunnel on the State line, whence they dropped rocking into La Junta, had sight of the Arkansaw, and tore down the long slope to Dodge City, where Cheyne took comfort once again from setting his watch an hour ahead.

There was very little talk in the car. The secretary and typewriter sat together on the stamped Spanish-leather cushions by the plate-glass observation-window at the rear end, watching the surge and ripple of the ties crowded back behind them, and, it is believed, making notes of the scenery. Cheyne moved nervously between his own extrav-

agant gorgeousness and the naked necessity of the combination, an unlit cigar in his teeth, till the pitying crews forgot that he was their tribal enemy, and did their best to entertain him.

At night the bunched electrics lit up that distressful palace of all the luxuries, and they fared sumptuously, swinging on through the emptiness of abject desolation. Now they heard the swish of a water-tank, and the guttural voice of a Chinaman, the clink-clink of hammers that tested the Krupp steel wheels, and the oath of a tramp chased off the rear platform; now the solid crash of coal shot into the tender; and now a beating back of noises as they flew past a waiting train. Now they looked out into great abysses, a trestle purring beneath their tread, or up to rocks that barred out half the stars. Now scaur and ravine changed and rolled back to jagged mountains on the horizon's edge, and now broke into hills lower and lower, till at last came the true plains.

At Dodge City an unknown hand threw in a copy of a Kansas paper containing some sort of an interview with Harvey, who had evidently fallen in with an enterprising reporter, telegraphed on from Boston. The joyful journalese revealed that it was beyond question their boy, and it soothed Mrs. Cheyne for a while. Her one word "hurry" was conveyed by the crews to the engineers at Nickerson, Topeka, and Marceline, where

the grades are easy, and they brushed the Continent behind them. Towns and villages were close together now, and a man could feel here that he moved among people.

"I can't see the dial, and my eyes ache so. What are we doing?"

"The very best we can, mama. There's no sense in getting in before the Limited. We'd only have to wait."

"I don't care. I want to feel we're moving. Sit down and tell me the miles."

Cheyne sat down and read the dial for her (there were some miles which stand for records to this day), but the seventy-foot car never changed its long, steamer-like roll, moving through the heat with the hum of a giant bee. Yet the speed was not enough for Mrs. Cheyne; and the heat, the remorseless August heat, was making her giddy; the clock-hands would not move, and when, oh, when would they be in Chicago?

It is not true that, as they changed engines at Fort Madison, Cheyne passed over to the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers an endowment sufficient to enable them to fight him and his fellows on equal terms for evermore. He paid his obligations to engineers and firemen as he believed they deserved, and only his bank knows what he gave the crews who had sympa-

thised with him. It is on record that the last crew took entire charge of switching operations at Sixteenth Street, because "she" was in a doze at last, and Heaven was to help any one who bumped her.

Now the highly paid specialist who conveys the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Limited from Chicago to Elkhart is something of an autocrat, and he does not approve of being told how to back up to a car. None the less he handled the "Constance" as if she might have been a load of dynamite, and when the crew rebuked him, they did it in whispers and dumb show.

"Pshaw!" said the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé men, discussing life later, "we weren't runnin' for a record. Harvey Cheyne's wife, she were sick back, an' we didn't want to jounce her. 'Come to think of it, our runnin' time from San Diego to Chicago was 57.54. You can tell that to them Eastern way-trains. When we're tryin' for a record, we'll let you know."

To the Western man (though this would not please either city) Chicago and Boston are cheek by jowl, and some railroads encourage the delusion. The Limited whirled the "Constance" into Buffalo and the arms of the New York Central and Hudson River (illustrious magnates with white whiskers and gold charms on their watch-chains boarded her here to talk a little

business to Cheyne), who slid her gracefully into Albany, where the Boston and Albany completed the run from tide-water to tide-water — total time, eighty-seven hours and thirty-five minutes, or three days, fifteen hours and one half. Harvey was waiting for them.

After violent emotion most people and all boys demand food. They feasted the returned prodigal behind drawn curtains, cut off in their great happiness, while the trains roared in and out around them. Harvey ate, drank, and enlarged on his adventures all in one breath, and when he had a hand free his mother fondled it. His voice was thickened with living in the open, salt air; his palms were rough and hard, his wrists dotted with the marks of gurry-sores; and a fine full flavour of cod-fish hung round rubber boots and blue jersey.

The father, well used to judging men, looked at him keenly. He did not know what enduring harm the boy might have taken. Indeed, he caught himself thinking that he knew very little whatever of his son; but he distinctly remembered an unsatisfied, dough-faced youth who took delight in "calling down the old man" and reducing his mother to tears — such a person as adds to the gaiety of public rooms and hotel piazzas, where the ingenuous young of the wealthy play with or revile the bell-boys. But this well set-up

fisher-youth did not wriggle, looked at him with eyes steady, clear, and unflinching, and spoke in a tone distinctly, even startlingly, respectful. There was that in his voice, too, which seemed to promise that the change might be permanent, and that the new Harvey had come to stay.

"Some one's been coercing him," thought Cheyne. "Now Constance would never have allowed that. Don't see as Europe could have done it any better."

"But why didn't you tell this man, Troop, who you were?" the mother repeated, when Harvey had expanded his story at least twice.

"Disko Troop, dear. The best man that ever walked a deck. I don't care who the next is."

"Why didn't you tell him to put you ashore? You know papa would have made it up to him ten times over."

"I know it; but he thought I was crazy. I'm afraid I called him a thief because I couldn't find the bills in my pocket."

"A sailor found them by the flagstaff that—that night," sobbed Mrs. Cheyne.

"That explains it, then. I don't blame Troop any. I just said I wouldn't work—on a Banker, too—and of course he hit me on the nose, and oh! I bled like a stuck hog."

"My poor darling! They must have abused you horribly."

"Dunno quite. Well, after that, I saw a light."

Cheyne slapped his leg and chuckled. This was going to be a boy after his own hungry heart. He had never seen precisely that twinkle in Harvey's eye before.

"And the old man gave me ten and a half a month; he's paid me half now; and I took hold with Dan and pitched right in. I can't do a man's work yet. But I can handle a dory 'most as well as Dan, and I don't get rattled in a fog—much; and I can take my trick in light winds—that's steering, dear—and I can 'most bait up a trawl, and I know my ropes, of course; and I can pitch fish till the cows come home, and I'm great on old Josephus, and I'll show you how I can clear coffee with a piece of fish-skin, and—I think I'll have another cup, please. Say, you've no notion what a heap of work there is in ten and a half a month!"

"I began with eight and a half, my son," said Cheyne.

"'That so? You never told me, sir."

"You never asked, Harve. I'll tell you about it some day, if you care to listen. Try a stuffed olive."

"Troop says *the* most interesting thing in the world is to find out how the next man gets his vittles. It's great to have a trimmed-up meal

again. We were well fed, though. Best mug on the Banks. Disko fed us first-class. He's a great man. And Dan—that's his son—Dan's *my* partner. And there's Uncle Salters and his manures, an' he reads Josephus. He's sure I'm crazy yet. And there's poor little Penn, and he *is* crazy. You mustn't talk to him about Johnstown, because— And, oh, you *must* know Tom Platt and Long Jack and Manuel. Manuel saved my life. I'm sorry he's a Portugee. He can't talk much, but he's an everlasting musician. He found me struck adrift and drifting, and hauled me in."

"I wonder your nervous system isn't completely wrecked," said Mrs. Cheyne.

"What for, mama? I worked like a horse and I ate like a hog and I slept like a dead man."

That was too much for Mrs. Cheyne, who began to think of her visions of a corpse rocking on the salty seas. She went to her state-room, and Harvey curled up beside his father, explaining his indebtedness.

"You can depend upon me to do everything I can for the crowd, Harve. They seem to be good men on your showing."

"Best in the Fleet, sir. Ask at Gloucester," said Harvey. "But Disko believes still he's cured me of being crazy. Dan's the only one I've let on to about you, and our private cars and all the rest of it, and I'm not *quite* sure Dan be-

lieves. I want to paralyse 'em to-morrow. Say, can't they run the 'Constance' over to Gloucester? Mama don't look fit to be moved, anyway, and we're bound to finish cleaning out by to-morrow. Wouverman takes our fish. You see, we're first off the Banks this season, and it's four twenty-five a quintal. We held out till he paid it. They want it quick."

"You mean you'll have to work to-morrow, then?"

"I told Troop I would. I'm on the scales. I've brought the tallies with me." He looked at the greasy notebook with an air of importance that made his father choke. "There isn't but three — no — two ninety-four or five quintal more by my reckoning."

"Hire a substitute," suggested Cheyne, to see what Harvey would say.

"Can't, sir. I'm tally-man for the schooner. Troop says I've a better head for figures than Dan. Troop's a mighty just man."

"Well, suppose I don't move the 'Constance' to-night, how'll you fix it?"

Harvey looked at the clock, which marked twenty past eleven.

"Then I'll sleep here till three and catch the four o'clock freight. They let us men from the Fleet ride free, as a rule."

"That's a notion. But I think we can get

the 'Constance' around about as soon as your men's freight. Better go to bed now."

Harvey spread himself on the sofa, kicked off his boots, and was asleep before his father could shade the electrics. Cheyne sat watching the young face under the shadow of the arm thrown over the forehead, and among many things that occurred to him was the notion that he might perhaps have been neglectful as a father.

"One never knows when one's taking one's biggest risks," he said. "It might have been worse than drowning; but I don't think it has — I don't think it has. If it hasn't, I haven't enough to pay Troop, that's all; and I don't think it has."

Morning brought a fresh sea breeze through the windows, the "Constance" was side-tracked among freight-cars at Gloucester, and Harvey had gone to his business.

"Then he'll fall overboard again and be drowned," the mother said bitterly.

"We'll go and look, ready to throw him a rope in case. You've never seen him working for his bread," said the father.

"What nonsense! As if any one expected —"

"Well, the man that hired him did. He's about right, too."

They went down between the stores full of fishermen's oilskins to Wouverman's wharf, where

the *We're Here* rode high, her Bank flag still flying, all hands busy as beavers in the glorious morning light. Disko stood by the main hatch superintending Manuel, Penn, and Uncle Salters at the tackle. Dan was swinging the loaded baskets inboard as Long Jack and Tom Platt filled them, and Harvey, with a notebook, represented the skipper's interests before the clerk of the scales on the salt-sprinkled wharf-edge.

"Ready!" cried the voices below. "Haul!" cried Disko. "Hi!" said Manuel. "Here!" said Dan, swinging the basket. Then they heard Harvey's voice, clear and fresh, checking the weights.

The last of the fish had been whipped out, and Harvey leaped from the string-piece six feet to a ratline, as the shortest way to hand Disko the tally, shouting, "Two ninety-seven, and an empty hold!"

"What's total, Harve?" said Disko.

"Eight sixty-five. Three thousand six hundred and seventy-six dollars *and* a quarter. 'Wish I'd share as well as wage."

"Well, I won't go so far as to say you hevn't deserved it, Harve. Don't you want to slip up to Wouverman's office and take him our tallies?"

"Who's that boy?" said Cheyne to Dan, well used to all manner of questions from those idle imbeciles called summer boarders.

"Well, he's a kind o' supercargo," was the answer. "We picked him up struck adrift on the Banks. Fell overboard from a liner, he sez. He was a passenger. He's by way o' bein' a fisherman now."

"Is he worth his keep?"

"Ye-ep. Dad, this man wants to know ef Harve's worth his keep. Say, would you like to go aboard? We'll fix a ladder for her."

"I should very much, indeed. 'Twon't hurt you, mama, and you'll be able to see for yourself."

The woman who could not lift her head a week ago scrambled down the ladder, and stood aghast amid the mess and tangle aft.

"Be you anyways interested in Harve?" said Disko.

"Well, ye-es."

"He's a good boy, an' ketches right hold jest as he's bid. You've heard haow we found him? He was sufferin' from nervous prostration, I guess, 'r else his head had hit somethin', when we hauled him aboard. He's all over that naow. Yes, this is the cabin. 'Tain't anyways in order, but you're quite welcome to look around. Those are his figures on the stove-pipe, where we keep the reckonin' mostly."

"Did he sleep here?" said Mrs. Cheyne, sitting on a yellow locker and surveying the disorderly bunks

"No. He berthed forward, madam, an' only fer him an' my boy hookin' fried pies an' muggin' up when they ought to ha' been asleep, I dunno as I've any special fault to find with him."

"There weren't nothin' wrong with Harve," said Uncle Salters, descending the steps. "He hung my boots on the main-truck, and he ain't over an' above respectful to such as knows more'n he do, especially about farmin'; but he were mostly misled by Dan."

Dan, in the meantime, profiting by dark hints from Harvey early that morning, was executing a war-dance on deck. "Tom, Tom!" he whispered down the hatch. "His folks has come, an' dad hain't caught on yet, an' they're pow-wowin' in the cabin. She's a daisy, an' he's all Harve claimed he was, by the looks of him."

"Howly Smoke!" said Long Jack, climbing out covered with salt and fish-skin. "D'ye belave his tale av the kid an' the little four-horse rig was thrue?"

"I knew it all along," said Dan. "Come an' see dad mistook in his judgments."

They came delightedly, just in time to hear Cheyne say: "I'm glad he has a good character, because — he's my son."

Disko's jaw fell,— Long Jack always vowed that he heard the click of it,— and he stared alternately at the man and the woman.

"I got his telegram in San Diego four days ago, and we came over."

"In a private car?" said Dan. "He said ye might."

"In a private car, of course."

Dan looked at his father with a hurricane of irreverent winks.

"There was a tale he tould us av drivin' four little ponies in a rig av his own," said Long Jack. "Was that thrue now?"

"Very likely," said Cheyne. "Was it, mama?"

"He had a little drag when we were in Toledo, I think," said the mother.

Long Jack whistled. "Oh, Disko!" said he, and that was all.

"I wuz — I am mistook in my jedgments — worse'n the men o' Marblehead," said Disko, as though the words were being windlassed out of him. "I don't mind ownin' to you, Mister Cheyne, as I mistrusted the boy to be crazy. He talked kinder odd about money."

"So he told me."

"Did he tell ye anything else? 'Cause I pounded him once." This with a somewhat anxious glance at Mrs. Cheyne.

"Oh, yes," Cheyne replied. "I should say it probably did him more good than anything else in the world."

"I jedged 'twuz necessary, er I wouldn't ha'

done it. I don't want you to think we abuse our boys any on this packet."

"I don't think you do, Mr. Troop."

Mrs. Cheyne had been looking at the faces — Disko's ivory-yellow, hairless, iron countenance; Uncle Salters's, with its rim of agricultural hair; Penn's bewildered simplicity; Manuel's quiet smile; Long Jack's grin of delight; and Tom Platt's scar. Rough, by her standards, they certainly were; but she had a mother's wits in her eyes, and she rose with outstretched hands.

"Oh, tell me, which is who?" said she, half sobbing. "I want to thank you and bless you — all of you."

"Faith, that pays me a hunder time," said Long Jack.

Disko introduced them all in due form. The captain of an old-time Chinaman could have done no better, and Mrs. Cheyne babbled incoherently. She nearly threw herself into Manuel's arms when she understood that he had first found Harvey.

"But how *shall* I leave him dreeft?" said poor Manuel. "What do you yourself if you find him so? Eh, wha-at? We are in one good boy, and I am *ever* so pleased he come to be your son."

"And he told me Dan was his partner!" she cried. Dan was already sufficiently pink, but he turned a rich crimson when Mrs. Cheyne kissed him

on both cheeks before the assembly. Then they led her forward to show her the fo'c'sle, at which she wept again, and must needs go down to see Harvey's identical bunk, and there she found the nigger cook cleaning up the stove, and he nodded as though she were some one he had expected to meet for years. They tried, two at a time, to explain the boat's daily life to her, and she sat by the pawl-post, her gloved hands on the greasy table, laughing with trembling lips and crying with dancing eyes.

"And who's ever to use the *We're Here* after this?" said Long Jack to Tom Platt. "I feel it as if she'd made a cathedral av ut all."

"Cathedral!" sneered Tom Platt. "Oh, ef it had bin even the Fish C'mmission boat instid o' this bally-hoo o' blazes. Ef we only hed some decency an' order an' side-boys when she goes over! She'll have to climb that ladder like a hen, an' we — we ought to be mannin' the yards!"

"Then Harvey was *not* mad," said Penn, slowly, to Cheyne.

"No, indeed — thank God," the big millionaire replied, stooping down tenderly.

"It must be terrible to be mad. Except to lose your child, I do not know anything more terrible. But your child has come back? Let us thank God for that."

"Hello!" said Harvey, looking down upon them benignly from the wharf.

"I wuz mistook, Harve. I wuz mistook," said Disko, swiftly, holding up a hand. "I wuz mistook in my jedgments. Ye needn't rub it in any more."

"'Guess I 'll take care o' that," said Dan, under his breath.

"You'll be goin' off naow, won't ye?"

"Well, not without the balance of my wages, 'less you want to have the *We're Here* attached."

"Thet's so; I'd clean forgot"; and he counted out the remaining dollars. "You done all you contracted to do, Harve; and you done it 'baout's well as ef you'd been brought up —" Here Disko brought himself up. He did not quite see where the sentence was going to end.

"Outside of a private car?" suggested Dan, wickedly.

"Come on, and I'll show her to you," said Harvey.

Cheyne stayed to talk to Disko, but the others made a procession to the depot, with Mrs. Cheyne at the head. The French maid shrieked at the invasion; and Harvey laid the glories of the "Constance" before them without a word. They took them in in equal silence — stamped leather, silver door-handles and rails, cut velvet, plate-glass, nickel, bronze, hammered iron, and the rare woods of the Continent inlaid.

"I told you," said Harvey; "I told you." This was his crowning revenge, and a most ample one.

Mrs. Cheyne decreed a meal; and that nothing might be lacking to the tale Long Jack told afterwards in his boarding-house, she waited on them herself. Men who are accustomed to eat at tiny tables in howling gales have curiously neat and finished table-manners; but Mrs. Cheyne, who did not know this, was surprised. She longed to have Manuel for a butler; so silently and easily did he comport himself among the frail glassware and dainty silver. Tom Platt remembered great days on the *Ohio* and the manners of foreign potentates who dined with the officers; and Long Jack, being Irish, supplied the small talk till all were at their ease.

In the *We're Here's* cabin the fathers took stock of each other behind their cigars. Cheyne knew well enough when he dealt with a man to whom he could not offer money; equally well he knew that no money could pay for what Disko had done. He kept his own counsel and waited for an opening.

"I hevn't done anything *to* your boy or *fer* your boy excep' make him work a piece an' learn him how to handle the hog-yoke," said Disko. "He has twice my boy's head for figgers."

"By the way," Cheyne answered casually, "what d'you calculate to make of your boy?"

Disko removed his cigar and waved it comprehensively round the cabin. "Dan's jest plain boy, an' he don't allow me to do any of his thinkin'. He'll hev this able little packet when I'm laid by. He ain't noways anxious to quit the business. I know that."

"Mmm! 'Ever been West, Mr. Troop?"

"'Bin's fer ez Noo York once in a boat. I've no use for railroads. No more hez Dan. Salt water's good enough fer the Troops. I've been 'most everywhere — in the nat'ral way, o' course."

"I can give him all the salt water he's likely to need — till he's a skipper."

"Haow's that? I thought you wuz a kinder railroad king. Harve told me so when — I was mistook in my jedgments."

"We're all apt to be mistaken. I fancied perhaps you might know I own a line of tea-clippers — San Francisco to Yokohama — six of 'em — iron-built, about seventeen hundred and eighty tons apiece."

"Blame that boy! He never told. I'd ha' listened to *that*, instid o' his truck abaout railroads an' pony-carriages."

"He didn't know."

"'Little thing like that slipped his mind, I guess."

"No, I only capt — took hold of the 'Blue

M.' freighters — Morgan and McQuade's old line — this summer."

Disko collapsed where he sat, beside the stove.

"Great Cæsar Almighty! I mistrust I've bin fooled from one end to the other. Why, Phil Airheart he went from this very town six year back — no, seven — an' he's mate on the *San José* now — twenty-six days was her time out. His sister she's livin' here yet, an' she reads his letters to my woman. An' *you* own the 'Blue M.' freighters?"

Cheyne nodded.

"If I'd known that I'd ha' jerked the *We're Here* back to port all standin', on the word."

"Perhaps that wouldn't have been so good for Harvey."

"Ef I'd only known! Ef he'd only *said* about the cussed Line, I'd ha' understood! I'll never stand on my own jedgments again — never. They're well-found packets, Phil Airheart he says so."

"I'm glad to have a recommend from that quarter. Airheart's skipper of the *San José* now. What I was getting at is to know whether you'd lend me Dan for a year or two, and we'll see if we can't make a mate of him. Would you trust him to Airheart?"

"It's a resk taking a raw boy —"

"I know a man who did more for me."

"That's diff'runt. Look at here naow, I ain't recommendin' Dan special because he's my own flesh an' blood. *I* know Bank ways ain't clipper ways, but he hain't much to learn. Steer he can — no boy better, ef *I* say it — an' the rest's in our blood an' get; but I could wish he warn't so cussed weak on navigation."

"Airheart will attend to that. He'll ship as a boy for a voyage or two, and then we can put him in the way of doing better. Suppose you take him in hand this winter, and I'll send for him early in the spring. I know the Pacific's a long ways off —"

"Pshaw! We Troops, livin' an' dead, are all around the earth an' the seas thereof."

"But I want you to understand — and I mean this — any time you think you'd like to see him, tell me, and I'll attend to the transportation. 'Twon't cost you a cent."

"Ef you'll walk a piece with me, we'll go to my house an' talk this to my woman. I've bin so crazy mistook in all my jedgments, it don't seem to me this was like to be real."

They went over to Troop's eighteen-hundred-dollar, blue-trimmed white house, with a retired dory full of nasturtiums in the front yard and a shuttered parlor which was a museum of oversea plunder. There sat a large woman, silent and grave, with the dim eyes of those who look long

to sea for the return of their beloved. Cheyne addressed himself to her, and she gave consent wearily.

"We lose one hundred a year from Gloucester only, Mr. Cheyne," she said — "one hundred boys an' men; and I've come so's to hate the sea as if 'twuz alive an' listenin'. God never made it fer humans to anchor on. These packets o' yours they go straight out, I take it, and straight home again?"

"As straight as the winds let 'em, and I give a bonus for record passages. Tea don't improve by being at sea."

"When he wuz little he used to play at keeping store, an' I had hopes he might follow that up. But soon's he could paddle a dory I knew that were goin' to be denied me."

"They're square-riggers, mother; iron-built an' well found. Remember what Phil's sister reads you when she gits his letters."

"I've never known as Phil told lies, but he's too venturesome (like most of 'em that use the sea). Ef Dan sees fit, Mr. Cheyne, he can go — fer all o' me."

"She jest despises the ocean," Disko explained, "an' I — I dunno haow to act polite, I guess, er I'd thank you better."

"My father — my own eldest brother — two nephews — an' my second sister's man," she said,

dropping her head on her hand. "Would *you* care fer any one that took all those?"

Cheyne was relieved when Dan turned up and accepted with more delight than he was able to put into words. Indeed, the offer meant a plain and sure road to all desirable things; but Dan thought most of commanding watch on broad decks, and looking into far-away harbours.

Mrs. Cheyne had spoken privately to the unaccountable Manuel in the matter of Harvey's rescue. He seemed to have no desire for money. Pressed hard, he said that he would take five dollars, because he wanted to buy something for a girl. Otherwise — "How shall I take money when I make so easy my eats and smokes? You *will* giva some if I like or no? Eh, wha-at? Then you shall giva me money, but not that way. You shall giva all you can think." He introduced her to a snuffy Portuguese priest with a list of semi-destitute widows as long as his cassock. As a strict Unitarian, Mrs. Cheyne could not sympathise with the creed, but she ended by respecting the brown, voluble little man.

Manuel, faithful son of the Church, appropriated all the blessings showered on her for her charity. "That letta me out," said he. "I have now ver' good absolutions for six months"; and he strolled forth to get a handkerchief for the girl of the hour and to break the hearts of all the others.

Salters went West for a season with Penn, and left no address behind. He had a dread that these millionary people, with wasteful private cars, might take undue interest in his companion. It was better to visit inland relatives till the coast was clear. "Never you be adopted by rich folk, Penn," he said in the cars, "or I'll take 'n' break this checker-board over your head. Ef you forgit your name agin — which is Pratt — you remember you belong with Salters Troop, an' set down right where you are till I come fer you. Don't go taggin' araound after them whose eyes bung out with fatness, accordin' to Scripcher."

CHAPTER X

But it was otherwise with the *We're Here's* silent cook, for he came up, his kit in a handkerchief, and boarded the "Constance." Pay was no particular object, and he did not in the least care where he slept. His business, as revealed to him in dreams, was to follow Harvey for the rest of his days They tried argument and, at last, persuasion; but there is a difference between one Cape Breton and two Alabama negroes, and the matter was referred to Cheyne by the cook and porter. The millionaire only laughed. He presumed Harvey might need a body-servant some day or other, and was sure that one volunteer was worth five hirelings. Let the man stay, therefore; even though he called himself MacDonald and swore in Gaelic. The car could go back to Boston, where, if he were still of the same mind, they would take him West.

With the "Constance," which in his heart of hearts he loathed, departed the last remnant of Cheyne's millionairedom, and he gave himself up to an energetic idleness. This Gloucester was a

new town in a new land, and he purposed to "take it in," as of old he had taken in all the cities from Snohomish to San Diego of that world whence he hailed. They made money along the crooked street which was half wharf and half ship's store: as a leading professional he wished to learn how the noble game was played. Men said that four out of every five fish-balls served at New England's Sunday breakfast came from Gloucester, and overwhelmed him with figures in proof—statistics of boats, gear, wharf-frontage, capital invested, salting, packing, factories, insurance, wages, repairs, and profits. He talked with the owners of the large fleets whose skippers were little more than hired men, and whose crews were almost all Swedes or Portuguese. Then he conferred with Disko, one of the few who owned their craft, and compared notes in his vast head. He coiled himself away on chain-cables in marine junk-shops, asking questions with cheerful, unslaked Western curiosity, till all the water-front wanted to know "what in thunder that man was after, anyhow." He prowled into the Mutual Insurance rooms, and demanded explanations of the mysterious remarks chalked up on the blackboard day by day; and that brought down upon him secretaries of every Fisherman's Widow and Orphan Aid Society within the city limits. They begged shamelessly, each man anxious to beat the

other institution's record, and Cheyne tugged at his beard and handed them all over to Mrs. Cheyne.

She was resting in a boarding-house near Eastern Point — a strange establishment, managed, apparently, by the boarders, where the table-cloths were red-and-white-checkered, and the population, who seemed to have known one another intimately for years, rose up at midnight to make Welsh rarebits if it felt hungry. On the second morning of her stay Mrs. Cheyne put away her diamond solitaires before she came down to breakfast.

"They're most delightful people," she confided to her husband; "so friendly and simple, too, though they are all Boston, nearly."

"That isn't simpleness, mama," he said, looking across the boulders behind the apple-trees where the hammocks were slung. "It's the other thing, that we — that I haven't got."

"It can't be," said Mrs. Cheyne, quietly. "There isn't a woman here owns a dress that cost a hundred dollars. Why, we —"

"I know it, dear. We have — of course we have. I guess it's only the style they wear East. Are you having a good time?"

"I don't see very much of Harvey; he's always with you; but I ain't near as nervous as I was."

"*I* haven't had such a good time since Willie died. I never rightly understood that I had a son

before this. Harve's got to be a great boy. 'Anything I can fetch you, dear? 'Cushion under your head? Well, we'll go down to the wharf again and look around."

Harvey was his father's shadow in those days, and the two strolled along side by side, Cheyne using the grades as an excuse for laying his hand on the boy's square shoulder. It was then that Harvey noticed and admired what had never struck him before — his father's curious power of getting at the heart of new matters as learned from men in the street.

"How d'you make 'em tell you everything without opening your head?" demanded the son, as they came out of a rigger's loft.

"I've dealt with quite a few men in my time, Harve, and one sizes 'em up somehow, I guess. I know something about myself, too." Then, after a pause, as they sat down on a wharf-edge: "Men can 'most always tell when a man has handled things for himself, and then they treat him as one of themselves."

"Same as they treat me down at Wouverman's wharf. I'm one of the crowd now. Disko has told every one I've earned my pay." Harvey spread out his hands and rubbed the palms together. "They're all soft again," he said dolefully.

"Keep 'em that way for the next few years,

while you're getting your education. You can harden 'em up after."

"Ye-es, I suppose so," was the reply, in no delighted voice.

"It rests with you, Harve. You can take cover behind your mama, of course, and put her on to fussing about your nerves and your high-strungness and all that kind of poppycock."

"Have I ever done that?" said Harvey, uneasily.

His father turned where he sat and thrust out a long hand. "*You* know as well as I do that I can't make anything of you if you don't act straight by me. I can handle you alone if you'll stay alone, but I don't pretend to manage both you *and* mama. Life's too short, anyway."

"Don't make me out much of a fellow, does it?"

"I guess it was my fault a good deal; but if you want the truth, you haven't been much of anything up to date. Now, have you?"

"Umm! Disko thinks . . . Say, what d'you reckon it's cost you to raise me from the start — first, last, and all over?"

Cheyne smiled. "I've never kept track, but I should estimate, in dollars and cents, nearer fifty than forty thousand; maybe sixty. The young generation comes high. It has to have things, and it tires of 'em, and — the old man foots the bill."

Harvey whistled, but at heart he was rather pleased to think that his upbringing had cost so much. "And all that's sunk capital, isn't it?"

"Invested, Harve. Invested, I hope."

"Making it only thirty thousand, the thirty I've earned is about ten cents on the hundred. That's a mighty poor catch." Harvey wagged his head solemnly.

Cheyne laughed till he nearly fell off the pile into the water.

"Disko has got a heap more than that out of Dan since he was ten; and Dan's at school half the year, too."

"Oh, that's what you're after, is it?"

"No. I'm not after anything. I'm not stuck on myself any just now—that's all. . . . I ought to be kicked."

"I can't do it, old man; or I would, I presume, if I'd been made that way."

"Then I'd have remembered it to the last day I lived—and *never* forgiven you," said Harvey, his chin on his doubled fists.

"Exactly. That's about what *I'd* do. You see?"

"I see. The fault's with me and no one else. All the samey, something's got to be done about it."

Cheyne drew a cigar from his vest-pocket, bit off the end, and fell to smoking. Father and son

were very much alike; for the beard hid Cheyne's mouth, and Harvey had his father's slightly aquiline nose, close-set black eyes, and narrow, high cheek-bones. With a touch of brown paint he would have made up very picturesquely as a Red Indian of the story-books.

"Now you can go on from here," said Cheyne, slowly, "costing me between six or eight thousand a year till you're a voter. Well, we'll call you a man then. You can go right on from *that*, living on me to the tune of forty or fifty thousand, besides what your mother will give you, with a valet and a yacht or a fancy-ranch where you can pretend to raise trotting stock and play cards with your own crowd."

"Like Lorry Tuck?" Harvey put in.

"Yep; or the two De Vitré boys or old man McQuade's son. California's full of 'em, and here's an Eastern sample while we're talking."

A shiny black steam-yacht, with mahogany deck-house, nickel-plated binnacles, and pink-and-white-striped awnings, puffed up the harbour, flying the burgee of some New York club. Two young men, in what they conceived to be sea costumes, were playing cards by the saloon skylight; and a couple of women with red and blue parasols looked on and laughed noisily.

"'Shouldn't care to be caught out in her in any sort of a breeze. No, beam," said Harvey, criti-

cally, as the yacht slowed to pick up her mooring-buoy.

"They're having what stands them for a good time. I can give you that, and twice as much as that, Harve. How'd you like it?"

"Cæsar! That's no way to get a dinghy overside," said Harvey, still intent on the yacht. "If I couldn't slip a tackle better than that I'd stay ashore. . . . What if I don't?"

"Stay ashore — or what?"

"Yacht and ranch and live on 'the old man,' and — get behind mama when there's trouble," said Harvey, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Why, in that case, you come right in with me, my son."

"Ten dollars a month?" Another twinkle.

"Not a cent more until you're worth it, and you won't begin to touch that for a few years."

"I'd sooner begin sweeping out the office — isn't that how the big bugs start? — and touch something now than —"

"I know it; we all feel that way. But I guess we can hire any sweeping we need. I made the same mistake myself of starting in too soon."

"Thirty million dollars' worth o' mistake, wasn't it? I'd risk it for that."

"I lost some; and I gained some. I'll tell you."

Cheyne pulled his beard and smiled as he

looked over the still water, and spoke away from Harvey, who presently began to be aware that his father was telling the story of his life. He talked in a low, even voice, without gesture and without expression; and it was a history for which a dozen leading journals would cheerfully have paid many dollars — the story of forty years that was at the same time the story of the New West, whose story is yet to be written.

It began with a kinless boy turned loose in Texas, and went on fantastically through a hundred changes and chops of life, the scenes shifting from State after Western State, from cities that sprang up in a month and in a season utterly withered away, to wild ventures in wilder camps that are now laborious, paved municipalities. It covered the building of three railroads and the deliberate wreck of a fourth. It told of steamers, townships, forests, and mines, and the men of every nation under heaven, manning, creating, hewing, and digging these. It touched on chances of gigantic wealth flung before eyes that could not see, or missed by the merest accident of time and travel; and through the mad shift of things, sometimes on horseback, more often afoot, now rich, now poor, in and out, and back and forth, deck-hand, train-hand, contractor, boarding-house keeper, journalist, engineer, drummer, real-estate agent, politician, dead-beat, rumseller, mine-

owner, speculator, cattle-man, or tramp, moved Harvey Cheyne, alert and quiet, seeking his own ends, and, so he said, the glory and advancement of his country.

He told of the faith that never deserted him even when he hung on the ragged edge of despair — the faith that comes of knowing men and things. He enlarged, as though he were talking to himself, on his very great courage and resource at all times. The thing was so evident in the man's mind that he never even changed his tone. He described how he had bested his enemies, or forgiven them, exactly as they had bested or forgiven him in those careless days; how he had entreated, cajoled, and bullied towns, companies, and syndicates, all for their enduring good; crawled round, through, or under mountains and ravines, dragging a string and hoop-iron railroad after him, and in the end, how he had sat still while promiscuous communities tore the last fragments of his character to shreds.

The tale held Harvey almost breathless, his head a little cocked to one side, his eyes fixed on his father's face, as the twilight deepened and the red cigar-end lit up the furrowed cheeks and heavy eyebrows. It seemed to him like watching a locomotive storming across country in the dark — a mile between each glare of the opened fire-door: but this locomotive could talk, and the

words shook and stirred the boy to the core of his soul. At last Cheyne pitched away the cigar-butt, and the two sat in the dark over the lapping water.

"I've never told that to any one before," said the father.

Harvey gasped. "It's just the greatest thing that ever was!" said he.

"That's what I *got*. Now I'm coming to what I didn't get. It won't sound much of anything to you, but I don't wish you to be as old as I am before you find out. I can handle men, of course, and I'm no fool along my own lines, but — but — I can't compete with the man who has been *taught!* I've picked up as I went along, and I guess it sticks out all over me."

"I've never seen it," said the son, indignantly.

"You will, though, Harve. You will — just as soon as you're through college. Don't I know it? Don't I know the look on men's faces when they think me a — a 'mucker,' as they call it out here? I can break them to little pieces — yes — but I can't get back at 'em to hurt 'em where they live. I don't say they're 'way, 'way up, but I feel I'm 'way, 'way, 'way off, somehow. Now *you've* got your chance. You've got to soak up all the learning that's around, and you'll live with a crowd that are doing the same thing. They'll be doing it for a few thousand dollars a year at most; but re-

member *you'll* be doing it for millions. You'll learn law enough to look after your own property when I'm out o' the light, and you'll have to be solid with the best men in the market (they are useful later); and above all, you'll have to stow away the plain, common, sit-down-with-your-chin-on-your-elbows book-learning. Nothing pays like that, Harve, and it's bound to pay more and more each year in our country — in business *and* in politics. You'll see."

"There's no sugar my end of the deal," said Harvey. "Four years at college! 'Wish I'd chosen the valet and the yacht!"

"Never mind, my son," Cheyne insisted. "You're investing your capital where it'll bring in the best returns; and I guess you won't find our property shrunk any when you're ready to take hold. Think it over, and let me know in the morning. Hurry! We'll be late for supper!"

As this was a business talk, there was no need for Harvey to tell his mother about it; and Cheyne naturally took the same point of view. But Mrs. Cheyne saw and feared, and was a little jealous. Her boy, who rode rough-shod over her, was gone, and in his stead reigned a keen-faced youth, abnormally silent, who addressed most of his conversation to his father. She understood it was business, and therefore a matter beyond her premises. If she had any doubts, they were re-

solved when Cheyne went to Boston and brought back a new diamond marquise-ring.

"What have you two men been doing now?" she said, with a weak little smile, as she turned it in the light.

"Talking—just talking, mama; there's nothing mean about Harvey."

There was not. The boy had made a treaty on his own account. Railroads, he explained gravely, interested him as little as lumber, real estate, or mining. What his soul yearned after was control of his father's newly purchased sailing-ships. If that could be promised him within what he conceived to be a reasonable time, he, for his part, guaranteed diligence and sobriety at college for four or five years. In vacation he was to be allowed full access to all details connected with the line,—he had asked not more than two thousand questions about it,— from his father's most private papers in the safe to the tug in San Francisco harbour.

"It's a deal," said Cheyne at the last. "You'll alter your mind twenty times before you leave college, o' course; but if you take hold of it in proper shape, and if you don't tie it up before you're twenty-three, I'll make the thing over to you. How's that, Harve?"

"Nope; never pays to split up a going concern. There's too much competition in the world any-

way, and Disko says 'blood-kin *hev* to stick together.' His crowd never go back on him. That's one reason, he says, why they make such big fares. Say, the *We're Here* goes off to the Georges on Monday. They don't stay long ashore, do they?"

"Well, we ought to be going, too, I guess. I've left my business hung up at loose ends between two oceans, and it's time to connect again. I just hate to do it, though; haven't had a holiday like this for twenty years."

"We *can't* go without seeing Disko off," said Harvey; "and Monday's Memorial Day. Let's stay over that, anyway."

"What is this memorial business? They were talking about it at the boarding-house," said Cheyne, weakly. He, too, was not anxious to spoil the golden days.

"Well, as far as I can make out, *this* business is a sort of song-and-dance act, whacked up for the summer boarders. Disko don't think much of it, he says, because they take up a collection for the widows and orphans. Disko's independent. Haven't you noticed that?"

"Well — yes. A little. In spots. Is it a town show, then?"

"The summer convention is. They read out the names of the fellows drowned or gone astray since last time, and they make speeches, and recite,

and all. Then, Disko says, the secretaries of the Aid Societies go into the back yard and fight over the catch. The real show, he says, is in the spring. The ministers all take a hand then, and there aren't any summer boarders around."

"I see," said Cheyne, with the brilliant and perfect comprehension of one born into and bred up to city pride. "We'll stay over for Memorial Day, and get off in the afternoon."

"'Guess I'll go down to Disko's and make him bring his crowd up before they sail. I'll have to stand with them, of course."

"Oh, that's it, is it," said Cheyne. "I'm only a poor summer boarder, and you're —"

"A Banker — full-blooded Banker," Harvey called back as he boarded a trolley, and Cheyne went on with his blissful dreams for the future.

Disko had no use for public functions where appeals were made for charity, but Harvey pleaded that the glory of the day would be lost, so far as he was concerned, if the *We're Heres* absented themselves. Then Disko made conditions. He had heard — it was astonishing how all the world knew all the world's business along the water-front — he had heard that a "Philadelphia actress-woman" was going to take part in the exercises; and he mistrusted that she would deliver "Skipper Ireson's Ride." Personally, he had as little use for actresses as for summer boarders; but justice was

justice, and though he himself (here Dan giggled) had once slipped up on a matter of judgment, this thing must not be. So Harvey came back to East Gloucester, and spent half a day explaining to an amused actress with a royal reputation on two seaboards the inwardness of the mistake she contemplated; and she admitted that it was justice, even as Disko had said.

Cheyne knew by old experience what would happen; but anything of the nature of a public palaver was meat and drink to the man's soul. He saw the trolleys hurrying west, in the hot, hazy morning, full of women in light summer dresses, and white-faced straw-hatted men fresh from Boston desks; the stack of bicycles outside the post-office; the come-and-go of busy officials, greeting one another; the slow flick and swash of bunting in the heavy air; and the important man with a hose sluicing the brick sidewalk.

"Mother," he said suddenly, "don't you remember — after Seattle was burned out — and they got her going again?"

Mrs. Cheyne nodded, and looked critically down the crooked street. Like her husband, she understood these gatherings, all the West over, and compared them one against another. The fishermen began to mingle with the crowd about the town-hall doors — blue-jowled Portuguese, their women bare-headed or shawled for the most

part; clear-eyed Nova Scotians, and men of the Maritime Provinces; French, Italians, Swedes, and Danes, with outside crews of coasting schooners; and everywhere women in black, who saluted one another with a gloomy pride, for this was their day of great days. And there were ministers of many creeds,— pastors of great, gilt-edged congregations, at the seaside for a rest, with shepherds of the regular work,— from the priests of the Church on the Hill to bush-bearded ex-sailor Lutherans, hail-fellow with the men of a score of boats. There were owners of lines of schooners, large contributors to the societies, and small men, their few craft pawned to the mastheads, with bankers and marine-insurance agents, captains of tugs and water-boats, riggers, fitters, lumpers, salters, boat-builders, and coopers, and all the mixed population of the water-front.

They drifted along the line of seats made gay with the dresses of the summer boarders, and one of the town officials patrolled and perspired till he shone all over with pure civic pride. Cheyne had met him for five minutes a few days before, and between the two there was entire understanding.

"Well, Mr. Cheyne, and what d'you think of our city? — Yes, madam, you can sit anywhere you please.— You have this kind of thing out West, I presume?"

"Yes, but we aren't as old as you."

"That's so, of course. You ought to have been at the exercises when we celebrated our two hundred and fiftieth birthday. I tell you, Mr. Cheyne, the old city did herself credit."

"So I heard. It pays, too. What's the matter with the town that it don't have a first-class hotel, though?"

"Right over there to the left, Pedro. Heaps o' room for you and your crowd.—Why, that's what *I* tell 'em all the time, Mr. Cheyne. There's big money in it, but I presume that don't affect you any. What we want is—"

A heavy hand fell on his broadcloth shoulder, and the flushed skipper of a Portland coal-and-ice coaster spun him half round. "What in thunder do you fellows mean by clappin' the law on the town when all decent men are at sea this way? Heh? Town's dry's a bone, an' smells a sight worse sence I quit. 'Might ha' left us one saloon for soft drinks, anyway."

"'Don't seem to have hindered your nourishment this morning, Carsen. I'll go into the politics of it later. Sit down by the door and think over your arguments till I come back."

"What good's arguments to me? In Miquelon champagne's eighteen dollars a case, and—" The skipper lurched into his seat as an organ-prelude silenced him.

"Our new organ," said the official proudly to Cheyne. "'Cost us four thousand dollars, too. We'll have to get back to high-licence next year to pay for it. I wasn't going to let the ministers have all the religion at their convention. Those are some of our orphans standing up to sing. My wife taught 'em. See you again later, Mr. Cheyne. I'm wanted on the platform."

High, clear, and true, children's voices bore down the last noise of those settling into their places.

"*O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever!*"

The women throughout the hall leaned forward to look as the reiterated cadences filled the air. Mrs. Cheyne, with some others, began to breathe short; she had hardly imagined there were so many widows in the world; and instinctively searched for Harvey. He had found the *We're Heres* at the back of the audience, and was standing, as by right, between Dan and Disko. Uncle Salters, returned the night before with Penn, from Pamlico Sound, received him suspiciously.

"Hain't your folk gone yet?" he grunted. "What are you doin' here, young feller?"

"*O ye Seas and Floods, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever!*"

"Hain't he good right?" said Dan. "He's bin there, same as the rest of us."

"Not in them clothes," Salters snarled.

"Shut your head, Salters," said Disko. "Your bile's gone back on you. Stay right where ye are, Harve."

Then up and spoke the orator of the occasion, another pillar of the municipality, bidding the world welcome to Gloucester, and incidentally pointing out wherein Gloucester excelled the rest of the world. Then he turned to the sea-wealth of the city, and spoke of the price that must be paid for the yearly harvest. They would hear later the names of their lost dead — one hundred and seventeen of them. (The widows stared a little, and looked at one another here.) Gloucester could not boast any overwhelming mills or factories. Her sons worked for such wage as the sea gave; and they all knew that neither Georges nor the Banks were cow-pastures. The utmost that folk ashore could accomplish was to help the widows and the orphans; and after a few general remarks he took this opportunity of thanking, in the name of the city, those who had so public-spiritedly consented to participate in the exercises of the occasion.

"I jest despise the beggin' pieces in it," growled Disko. "It don't give folk a fair notion of us."

"Ef folk won't be fore-handed an' put by when they've the chance," returned Salters, "it stands in the nature o' things they *hev* to be 'shamed. You take warnin' by that, young feller. Riches

endureth but for a season, ef you scatter them araound on lugsuries —"

"But to lose everything — everything," said Penn. "What can you do *then?* Once I"—the watery blue eyes stared up and down, as looking for something to steady them—"once I read—in a book, I think—of a boat where every one was run down — except some one—and he said to me —"

"Shucks!" said Salters, cutting in. "You read a little less an' take more int'rust in your vittles, and you'll come nearer earnin' your keep, Penn."

Harvey, jammed among the fishermen, felt a creepy, crawly, tingling thrill that began in the back of his neck and ended at his boots. He was cold, too, though it was a stifling day.

"'That the actress from Philadelphia?" said Disko Troop, scowling at the platform. "You've fixed it about old man Ireson, hain't ye, Harve? Ye know why naow."

It was not "Ireson's Ride" that the woman delivered, but some sort of poem about a fishing-port called Brixham and a fleet of trawlers beating in against storm by night, while the women made a guiding fire at the head of the quay with everything they could lay hands on.

"They took the grandam's blanket,
Who shivered and bade them go;
They took the baby's cradle,
Who could not say them no."

"Whew!" said Dan, peering over Long Jack's shoulder. "That's great! Must ha' bin expensive, though."

"Ground-hog case," said the Galway man. "Badly lighted port, Danny."

. . . . . .

"And knew not all the while
If they were lighting a bonfire
Or only a funeral pile."

The wonderful voice took hold of people by their heartstrings; and when she told how the drenched crews were flung ashore, living and dead, and they carried the bodies to the glare of the fires, asking: "Child, is this your father?" or "Wife, is this your man?" you could hear hard breathing all over the benches.

"And when the boats of Brixham
Go out to face the gales,
Think of the love that travels
Like light upon their sails!"

There was very little applause when she finished. The women were looking for their handkerchiefs, and many of the men stared at the ceiling with shiny eyes.

"H'm," said Salters; "that 'u'd cost ye a dollar to hear at any theater — maybe two. Some folk,

I presoom, can afford it. 'Seems downright waste to me. . . . Naow, how in Jerusalem did Cap Bart Edwardes strike adrift here?"

"No keepin' him under," said an Eastport man behind. "He's a poet, an' he's baound to say his piece. 'Comes from daown aour way, too."

He did not say that Captain B. Edwardes had striven for five consecutive years to be allowed to recite a piece of his own composition on Gloucester Memorial Day. An amused and exhausted committee had at last given him his desire. The simplicity and utter happiness of the old man, as he stood up in his very best Sunday clothes, won the audience ere he opened his mouth. They sat unmurmuring through seven-and-thirty hatchet-made verses describing at fullest length the loss of the schooner *Joan Hasken* off the Georges in the gale of 1867, and when he came to an end they shouted with one kindly throat.

A far-sighted Boston reporter slid away for a full copy of the epic and an interview with the author; so that earth had nothing more to offer Captain Bart Edwardes, ex-whaler, shipwright, master-fisherman, and poet, in the seventy-third year of his age.

"Naow, I call that sensible," said an Eastport man. "I've bin over that graound with his writin', jest as he read it, in my two hands, and I can testify that he's got it all in."

"If Dan here couldn't do better'n that with one hand before breakfast, he ought to be switched," said Salters, upholding the honour of Massachusetts on general principles. "Not but what I'm free to own he's considerable litt'ery — fer Maine. Still —"

"Guess Uncle Salters's goin' to die this trip. Fust compliment he's ever paid me," Dan sniggered. "What's wrong with you, Harve? You act all quiet and you look greenish. Feelin' sick?"

"Don't know what's the matter with me," Harvey replied. "'Seems if my insides were too big for my outsides. I'm all crowded up and shivery."

"Dispepsy? Pshaw—too bad. We'll wait for the readin', an' then we'll quit, an' catch the tide."

The widows — they were nearly all of that season's making — braced themselves rigidly like people going to be shot in cold blood, for they knew what was coming. The summer-boarder girls in pink and blue shirt-waists stopped tittering over Captain Edwardes's wonderful poem, and looked back to see why all was silent. The fishermen pressed forward as that town official who had talked with Cheyne bobbed up on the platform and began to read the year's list of losses, dividing them into months. Last September's casualties were mostly single men and strangers,

but his voice rang very loud in the stillness of the hall.

"September 9th.— Schooner *Florrie Anderson* lost, with all aboard, off the Georges.

"Reuben Pitman, master, 50, single, Main Street, City.

"Emil Olsen, 19, single, 329 Hammond Street, City; Denmark.

"Oscar Stanberg, single, 25, Sweden.

"Carl Stanberg, single, 28, Main Street, City.

"Pedro, supposed Madeira, single, Keene's boarding-house, City.

"Joseph Welsh, alias Joseph Wright, 30, St. John's, Newfoundland."

"No — Augusty, Maine," a voice cried from the body of the hall.

"He shipped from St. John's," said the reader, looking to see.

"I know it. He belongs in Augusty. My nevvy."

The reader made a pencilled correction on the margin of the list, and resumed:

"Same schooner, Charlie Ritchie, Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 33, single.

"Albert May, 267 Rogers Street, City, 27, single.

"September 27th.— Orvin Dollard, 30, married, drowned in dory off Eastern Point."

That shot went home, for one of the widows flinched where she sat, clasping and unclasping

her hands. Mrs. Cheyne, who had been listening with wide-opened eyes, threw up her head and choked. Dan's mother, a few seats to the right, saw and heard and quickly moved to her side. The reading went on. By the time they reached the January and February wrecks the shots were falling thick and fast, and the widows drew breath between their teeth.

"February 14th.— Schooner *Harry Randolph* dismasted on the way home from Newfoundland; Asa Musie, married, 32, Main Street, City, lost overboard.

"February 23d.— Schooner *Gilbert Hope;* went astray in dory, Robert Beavon, 29, married, native of Pubnico, Nova Scotia."

But his wife was in the hall. They heard a low cry, as though a little animal had been hit. It was stifled at once, and a girl staggered out of the hall. She had been hoping against hope for months, because some who have gone adrift in dories have been miraculously picked up by deep-sea sailing-ships. Now she had her certainty, and Harvey could see the policeman on the sidewalk hailing a hack for her. "It's fifty cents to the depot"—the driver began, but the policeman held up his hand—"but I'm goin' there anyway. Jump right in. Look at here, Alf; you don't pull me next time my lamps ain't lit. See?"

The side-door closed on the patch of bright

sunshine, and Harvey's eyes turned again to the reader and his endless list.

"April 19th.— Schooner *Mamie Dougias* lost on the Banks with all hands.

"Edward Canton, 43, master, married, City.

"D. Hawkins, alias Williams, 34, married, Shelbourne, Nova Scotia.

"G. W. Clay, coloured, 28, married, City."

And so on, and so on. Great lumps were rising in Harvey's throat, and his stomach reminded him of the day when he fell from the liner.

"May 10th.— Schooner *We're Here* [the blood tingled all over him]. Otto Svendson, 20, single, City, lost overboard."

Once more a low, tearing cry from somewhere at the back of the hall.

"She shouldn't ha' come. She shouldn't ha' come," said Long Jack, with a cluck of pity.

"Don't scrowge, Harve," grunted Dan. Harvey heard that much, but the rest was all darkness spotted with fiery wheels. Disko leaned forward and spoke to his wife, where she sat with one arm round Mrs. Cheyne, and the other holding down the snatching, catching, ringed hands.

"Lean your head daown — right daown!" she whispered. "It'll go off in a minute."

"I ca-an't! I do-don't! Oh, let me —" Mrs. Cheyne did not at all know what she said.

"You must," Mrs. Troop repeated. "Your boy's jest fainted dead away. They do that some when they're gettin' their growth. 'Wish to tend to him? We can git aout this side. Quite quiet. You come right along with me. Psha', my dear, we're both women, I guess. We must tend to aour men-folk. Come!"

The *We're Heres* promptly went through the crowd as a body-guard, and it was a very white and shaken Harvey that they propped up on a bench in an anteroom.

"Favours his ma," was Mrs. Troop's only comment, as the mother bent over her boy.

"How d'you suppose he could ever stand it?" she cried indignantly to Cheyne, who had said nothing at all. "It was horrible — horrible! We shouldn't have come. It's wrong and wicked! It — it isn't right! Why — why couldn't they put these things in the papers, where they belong? Are you better, darling?"

That made Harvey very properly ashamed. "Oh, I'm all right, I guess," he said, struggling to his feet, with a broken giggle. "'Must ha' been something I ate for breakfast."

"Coffee, perhaps," said Cheyne, whose face was all in hard lines, as though it had been cut out of bronze. "We won't go back again."

"'Guess 'twould be 'baout's well to git daown to the wharf," said Disko. "It's close in along

with them Dagoes, an' the fresh air will fresh Mrs. Cheyne up."

Harvey announced that he never felt better in his life; but it was not till he saw the *We're Here*, fresh from the lumper's hands, at Wouverman's wharf, that he lost his all-overish feelings in a queer mixture of pride and sorrowfulness. Other people — summer boarders and such-like — played about in cat-boats or looked at the sea from pier-heads; but he understood things from the inside — more things than he could begin to think about. None the less, he could have sat down and howled because the little schooner was going off. Mrs. Cheyne simply cried and cried every step of the way, and said most extraordinary things to Mrs. Troop, who "babied" her till Dan, who had not been "babied" since he was six, whistled aloud.

And so the old crowd — Harvey felt like the most ancient of mariners — dropped into the old schooner among the battered dories, while Harvey slipped the stern-fast from the pier-head, and they slid her along the wharf-side with their hands. Every one wanted to say so much that no one said anything in particular. Harvey bade Dan take care of Uncle Salters's sea-boots and Penn's dory-anchor, and Long Jack entreated Harvey to remember his lessons in seamanship; but the jokes fell flat in the presence of the two women,

and it is hard to be funny with green harbour-water widening between good friends.

"Up jib and fores'l!" shouted Disko, getting to the wheel, as the wind took her. "'See you later, Harve. Dunno but I come near thinkin' a heap o' you an' your folks."

Then she glided beyond ear-shot, and they sat down to watch her up the harbour. And still Mrs. Cheyne wept.

"Psha', my dear," said Mrs. Troop; "we're both women, I guess. Like's not it'll ease your heart to hev your cry aout. God He knows it never done me a mite o' good; but then He knows I've had something to cry fer!"

Now it was a few years later, and upon the other edge of America, that a young man came through the clammy sea-fog up a windy street which is flanked with most expensive houses built of wood to imitate stone. To him, as he was standing by a hammered iron gate, entered on horseback — and the horse would have been cheap at a thousand dollars — another young man. And this is what they said:

"Hello, Dan!"

"Hello, Harve!"

"What's the best with you?"

"Well, I'm so's to be that kind o' animal called

second mate this trip. Ain't you most through with that triple-invoiced college o' yours?"

"Getting that way. I tell you, the Leland Stanford Junior isn't a circumstance to the old *We're Here;* but I'm coming into the business for keeps next fall."

"Meanin' aour packets?"

"Nothing else. You just wait till I get my knife into you, Dan. I'm going to make the old line lie down and cry when I take hold."

"I'll resk it," said Dan, with a brotherly grin, as Harvey dismounted and asked whether he were coming in.

"That's what I took the cable fer; but, say, is the doctor anywheres araound? I'll draown that crazy nigger some day, his one cussed joke an' all."

There was a low, triumphant chuckle, as the ex-cook of the *We're Here* came out of the fog to take the horse's bridle. He allowed no one but himself to attend to any of Harvey's wants.

"Thick as the Banks, ain't it, doctor?" said Dan, propitiatingly.

But the coal-black Celt with the second-sight did not see fit to reply till he had tapped Dan on the shoulder, and for the twentieth time croaked the old, old prophecy in his ear:

"Master — man. Man — master," said he.

"You remember, Dan Troop, what I said? On the *We're Here?*"

"Well, I won't go so far as to deny that it do look like it as things stand at present," said Dan. "She was an able packet, and one way an' another I owe her a heap — her and dad."

"Me too," quoth Harvey Cheyne.

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